

Prisoners in Kuwait City visited

GENEVA (AP) — Delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) have begun visiting detainees in Kuwait City following reports of serious human rights abuses by security forces and freelance gangs. A statement issued at the Geneva headquarters of the all-Swiss agency Sunday said the visits began Saturday at the city's military prison under an agreement reached with the Kuwaiti government. It said that in line with standard ICRC procedures, detainees will be interviewed without witness. "After the visits, a confidential report will be given to the authorities, requesting, where necessary, improvements in the detainees' treatment and conditions," it added. Middle East Watch, a New York-based human rights group, reported last week that Kuwaiti security forces and freelance gangs used lit cigarettes, knives and other instruments to torture hundreds of people suspected of collaborating with Iraqi troops after the invasion of Kuwait. Many of the detainees are reported to be Palestinians.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالإنجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية «الرأي»

Masri arrives in Tunisia

TUNIS (Agencies) — The Jordanian foreign minister, Taher Al Masri, arrived here Sunday from Algeria after delivering a message from His Majesty King Hussein to Algerian President Chadli Benjedid. In Algeria, the minister said the Arab World should counter solutions to problems imposed by the outside world and that the international community should deal with the region's problems in the same spirit that it dealt with the Gulf crisis (see page 3). In Tunis, Mr. Masri was expected to meet with President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat, sources said. Mr. Masri has already visited Libya and will travel to Morocco, Mauritania, Sudan, Yemen and Syria before returning home.

Volume 16 Number 4660

AMMAN MONDAY, MARCH 25, 1991, RAMADAN 9, 1411

Price: Jordan 100 fils; Saudi Arabia 1.50 riyals; UAE 1.50 dirhams

Fahd orders end to anti-Arab propaganda

RIYADH (AP) — King Fahd Sunday ordered Saudi Arabian news media to avoid criticising other Arabs, Information Minister Ali Al Shaer announced. In a statement to the Saudi Press Agency, Mr. Shaer said the king's decision was inspired by the current holy month of Ramadan. "All (negative) responses in the media — press, radio and television — to what is published by the Arab media in general will be ceased as of Monday, the 9th of Ramadan," said the statement. "We hope that all other Arab and Islamic media will chart the same blessed Islamic course."

4 die, 7 missing in Egyptian floods

CAIRO (AP) — Four people died and seven are missing in the Sinai Peninsula because of flash floods from two days of heavy rain, a state-run newspaper said Sunday. The Al Massa newspaper quoted Major Mohammad Khodr, chief of security in the province of North Sinai, as saying that three bedouin shepherds were killed in the storm in addition to one motorist whose car overturned. Maj. Khodr said policemen are still searching for five missing bedouin children and the drivers of two cars which were found buried in the mud.

Israel says 3 guerrillas killed

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli soldiers shot and killed three heavily-armed guerrillas in Lebanon Sunday about a kilometre north of the border, the military command said. It said the troops encountered the three while on "operational duty." Sunday afternoon in the southwestern corner of the so-called "security zone" in Lebanon. The soldiers "opened fire and in the exchange of fire, the three guerrillas were killed," the command statement added.

Former Iraqi envoy heads for S. Arabia

MADRID (R) — The former Iraqi ambassador to Spain, who sought political asylum after the Gulf war, left Madrid for Riyadh Sunday aboard a Saudi Arabian airliner. Foreign Ministry spokesman Juan Lena told reporters Arshad Tawfik Ismail, who asked for asylum two weeks ago, left "voluntarily and at his own request." Earlier Spanish state radio, quoting Foreign Ministry sources, said Mr. Tawfik intended to contact Iraqi opposition groups.

Israel questions appointment of special U.N. envoy

TEL AVIV — U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar has appointed Edouard Brunner of Switzerland to replace Gunnar Jarring as Special Representative to the Middle East. Mr. Brunner, 58, is Switzerland's ambassador to Washington, and former deputy foreign minister. The post was established in 1967 by U.N. Resolution 242. It instructed the envoy "to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the states concerned in order to promote agreement and to assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement." Israeli diplomats had feared Mr. Brunner's mandate might be expanded — as Arab diplomats requested — beyond that specified in Resolution 242 to include tasks specified in later resolutions. These included calls for a U.N. representative to deal with the Palestinian issue, and for a U.N. mediator. But Mr. Brunner's appointment specified that Mr. Brunner would act "in accordance with Resolution 242." U.N. spokesman Francois Guiliani told the Jerusalem Post there was no expansion of his mandate. Israel's U.N. mission later issued a statement saying Brunner's appointment raised questions as to whether the representative "has a role to assume at the present time" amid U.S. efforts to work towards a Middle East settlement — The Jerusalem Post.

Shiite cleric blasts violence, but asks Saddam for amnesty

NAJAF, Iraq (Agencies) — The Muslim World's most senior Shiite scholar has again condemned a wave of killings and violence in a rebellion against the government of President Saddam Hussein — but he asked him to amnesty rebels.

A group of reporters met Grand Ayatollah Abol Qassem Al Khoei Sunday.

The group was brought to his home in Najaf, holy to Shiites, on a tour by the Information Ministry. Najaf was caught up in civil unrest which flared after the end of the six-week Gulf war.

By days of fighting between government troops and rebels, Ayatollah Khoei denied that he was under duress.

"I thank God there is no pressure," said the influential, 90-year-old cleric.

He added: "Now everything is finished and there is nothing. I am comfortable now and there is nothing."

An official said rioters had controlled the city for more than 10 days. Rebels had claimed that the cleric earlier issued a decree of jihad against the government from Najaf, an early centre of rebellion.

(In Amman, travellers from Iraq said Ayatollah Khoei had not made any call for jihad but had set up an administration in the holy site to bring back order after government troops lost control of Najaf.)

Ayatollah Khoei last week appeared with President Saddam whom he praised for crushing the unrest in the south. "Thanks be to God, God has enabled the president to stamp out this sedition," said Ayatollah Khoei.

Neighbouring Shiite Iran, accused by Baghdad of fanning unrest, led international protests over the episode, saying Ayatollah Khoei was kidnapped and forced to make a public show of support for President Saddam. It warned Iraq without his physical safety.

But Ayatollah Khoei told reporters

on Saturday he was not harassed by Baghdad, that the killing of Muslims was against Islam and he described anti-government rioters as "groups of ignorants" for whom he sought a general amnesty.

Ayatollah Khoei, who rarely makes public pronouncements, said of his meeting with President Saddam: "We were taken to Baghdad where we spent two nights after which we returned to Najaf."

His appearance in his home town before Iraqi journalists representing foreign organisations was evidently intended to answer accusations that he was under house arrest.

The tour also underlined government control of Najaf, as did a similar press visit last week to the other Shiite holy city of Karbala, both heavily damaged in civil strife.

Baghdad says the southern rebellion has been crushed. Similar unrest has swept the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq and opposition leaders

(Continued on page 3)

Iraq says U.S. wants to rob it of sovereignty

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Baghdad accused the United States Sunday of trying to rob it of its sovereignty in a draft U.N. Security Council resolution calling for the elimination of Iraq's military power.

The U.S. draft resolution, circulated to council members on Thursday, also fixes the border between Iraq and Kuwait, sets up a United Nations observer force and demands war reparations from Iraq's oil revenues.

The Iraqi News Agency (INA) published the full text of the 12-page document, which is being discussed by the council's four

other permanent members — the Soviet Union, China, Britain and France.

"The U.S. draft ceasefire resolution submitted to the Security Council... demonstrated the U.S. intent to rob Iraq of its sovereignty and to mortgage Iraq's resources," INA said.

Washington says a permanent Gulf war ceasefire would only go into effect when Iraq formally accepted all the conditions. Most economic sanctions would remain until the council decided otherwise, the draft resolution said.

It requires Iraq to accept the destruction and removal of its

ballistic missile systems and all "weapons of mass destruction" including chemical, biological and nuclear arms.

Commenting on the resolution, Iraq's Al Thawra newspaper, organ of the ruling Baath Party, said:

"Every paragraph and article in the draft resolution shows a clear bias and determination to intervene in Iraq's internal affairs in violation of the norms and charter of the United Nations."

"Never before has an international party presented a draft

(Continued on page 3)

All League members except Iraq attend preparatory talks

CAIRO (Agencies) — All of the Arab League's 21 members except Iraq Sunday held preparatory talks to discuss the agenda of a meeting next week of the organisation's permanent representatives.

This is the first Arab League function since the end of the Gulf war and Egyptian diplomats privately expressed their content with the high level of attendance.

The war had split the Arab League in half. Egypt and Saudi Arabia led Arab states which denounced Iraq.

An Arab League foreign ministers' meeting in Cairo last September drew only 12 of the members.

"This is the first meeting of the permanent representative to be held after the end of the crisis which struck the Arab World," said Assad Al Assad, interim Secretary-General of the Arab

League. "Despite the splits created in the Arab World, the paralysis of joint action and the damage to the whole Arab Nation, the Arabs are moving and making efforts to heal the wounds," he said.

The agenda of next Saturday's meeting includes reports presented by various Arab states. One of them is a report on halting Arab boycott to certain companies that deal with Israel. The report suggested that the companies in exchange offer to build factories and plants in Arab countries similar to those they have in the Jewish state.

Topics to be discussed in Cairo included Arab cooperation, the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories, Arab-African ties, liberation movements in South Africa and Arab-European dialogue.

Libya brought up the extension of U.S. economic sanctions against it.

"The purpose of the meeting is just to show up, to show a willingness to try and mend what was broken," said an Arab diplomat. "That in itself is an achievement."

"We cannot do without the Arab League. It is our symbol of liberation from foreign occupation. We cannot let it die because of splits and differences among the Arab states," he added.

The move to Cairo angered Tunisia, which at one point said it was thinking of withdrawing from league activities.

An official source in Algiers said the five countries in the Arab Maghreb Union — Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia — would probably be represented by ambassadors at the Cairo meeting.



KING HOSTS IFTAR: His Majesty King Hussein Sunday hosted an iftar at Basman Palace in honour of Lower House of Parliament members, heads of courts, heads of professional associations, information department directors, editors-in-chief of the local dailies, senior officials and refugee camp notables. The banquet was attended by His Royal

Highness Prince Faisal Ibn Al Hussein, Prime Minister Mudar Badran, Royal Court Chief Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'ad Ben Zeid and some Royal family members. The audience attended Al Maghreb prayers (Petra photo).

Iraqi cabinet reshuffle sign of positive change—Crown Prince

ATLANTA (Agencies) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan said in a CNN television interview Sunday that Iraq's cabinet reshuffle could signal the beginnings of an "evolution" in that country.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein signed decrees Saturday giving up his title of prime minister to a Shiite Muslim leader and making other changes.

"Everything in Iraq has changed; the situation as the United Nations reported, is paralysed," he said.

He said Jordan was preparing an official paper to explain its position and clear up any questions about its role in the Gulf crisis.

Prince Hassan said Jordan hopes for progress in Iraq.

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(Continued on page 5)

Israel orders 4 expulsions; ministers clamour for more

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — Israel Sunday ordered four Palestinian activists expelled from the occupied territories. Hardliners called for even stronger measures.

Such expulsions have drawn American and United Nations condemnation, but an Israeli foreign ministry official said the latest action was meant as a "warning" to the leaders of the Palestinian uprising.

Cabinet ministers defended the expulsion order and called for more to be banished, despite the objections of the United States.

After a meeting in which members of the right-wing government called for harsh measures to combat Palestinian attacks on Israelis, Religious Affairs Minister Avner Shaki contended Washington's opposition to expulsions was unfair.

"If America had had to deal with such people, with such terrorism, they would have certainly have used even more strict means but certainly they would deport people who are inciting against the government, who are preaching terrorism," he said.

The army announced expulsion

orders against four Palestinians from the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip allegedly active on behalf of the mainstream Fatah movement, driving force behind the 39-month-old uprising.

The four men have the right to appeal to the supreme court, which has quashed only one banishment order since Israel occupied the Gaza Strip, West Bank and Golan Heights in the 1967 war.

If the orders are carried out, they will bring to 66 the number

(Continued on page 5)

Andreotti urges Israel to take first step

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Italian premier Giulio Andreotti Sunday urged Israel to take the first step towards talks with the Arabs that would guarantee the Jewish state's security and "return land for peace."

Speaking to the American Jewish Committee and other U.S. Jewish leaders, the Italian premier said a key lesson of Israel's missile attacks on Israel in the Gulf war was that "the security of Israel is no longer merely a question of having safe borders."

Both Israel and the Arab members of the allied coalition that fought Iraq have realised this, Mr. Andreotti said, "paving the way for a more broadly based

review of the situation through negotiations and political dialogue between all the parties concerned."

"Once again, it is dialogue which must prevail over the sound of weapons and violence, and the responsibility of reopening it lies primarily with Israel, because of the leading position and major responsibility which Israel holds," Mr. Andreotti said.

Mr. Andreotti reminded his audience of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 of 1967, and 338 of 1973 which call for Israel's withdrawal from the occupied territories and for peace negotiations.

The executive director of the American Jewish Committee, David Harris, told the AP that he had some reservations about Mr. Andreotti's comments on border security.

"Kuwait was invaded by land, and the closer the enemy, the more accurate the missile," he said.

Mr. Harris was not enthused about the "land-for-peace" concept, but said any Arab state that sincerely wanted peace with Israel could reach an agreement and hold talks about occupied territory.

He noted that Menachem Begin's Likud government was considered intractable and inflexible

(Continued on page 3)

The future of Baathism in Iraq depends on what happens next

War, rebellion spark debate over ideology

By Lamis K. Andoni
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

A FEW HOURS prior to the U.S. declaration of a ceasefire on March 3 the allied forces bombed the national and regional commands of the Baathist Party. The thunderous explosion destroyed the marble buildings and knocked off the statue of Michel Aflaq — the Syrian-born co-founder of the pan-Arab Baathist movement. The attack was evidently a clear political warning to the regime and in retrospect a foretelling sign of the turmoil that post-war Iraq would go through.

But the destruction of the

Baathist Party headquarters was, in a metaphorical sense, also indicative of the questions raised in the post-war Iraq about the future of Baathism, if not pan-Arab nationalism, in the devastated country.

The appointment as prime minister of Dr. Saadoun Hammadi, the ideologue of the party, however, reflects the prevalence of the line of thinking which sees the preservation of Baathism in Iraq as crucial not only to the continuity of the regime but to the unity of the country.

This argument, which is said to reflect Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's thinking, was in the immediate term fostered

by the spectre of sectarian sedition which loomed over Iraq with the end of the war.

Many Baathists, including non-Iraqi Arabs who live in Iraq, have always argued that Baathism — as a pan-Arab nationalist and socialist ideology — has largely contributed to maintaining a united and secular country. Some have claimed that Baathism was able to solve the question of the ethnic minorities — but the frequent re-eruption of Kurdish insurrection has repeatedly questioned such a conclusion.

But the war, and more specifically the military defeat, has sparked a debate — believed to have included party circles

— concerning Arab nationalism and Baathism in Iraq.

The most striking aspect of the debate involves an emergence of a line of thinking which opposes further Iraqi involvement in Arab affairs and causes. The call for an Iraqi political withdrawal from Arab national causes is viewed by analysts and officials in Iraq as a direct reaction to disillusionment over Arab solidarity with Iraq during and after the war.

Iraqis in general have overcome the shock over what they view as Arab betrayal by countries which joined the anti-Iraqi coalition and disappointment by the failure of the Arab people to support Iraq in any substantive way.

The feeling that the Iraqis were abandoned by the Arabs

has provoked resentment among some Arab nationalists and the beginning of what could be an "isolationist" trend.

The disappointment in Arab reaction sometimes translates itself in negative feelings towards other Arabs, especially Palestinians, although there is no evidence that this hostility is widespread or representative of a political trend.

The underlying assumption behind the perceived hostility towards the Palestinians is that Iraq went to war in defence of Palestinian rights and that the Iraqis are fed up with sacrificing their own blood for other Arab causes. This is an argument which was frequently voiced in Egypt prior to the signing of the American-

brokered Camp David peace treaty with Israel in 1979.

But some analysts dismiss the significance of this school of thought, arguing that this is a temporary reaction to the outcome of the Iraqi feeling of isolation. They warn, however, that it could become a serious trend if Baathism collapsed or the country was fragmented.

Historically, the line of Iraqi nationalist thinking, according to some Iraqi historians, has had influence during the monarchy era and the brief rule of the late Abd al Karim Qassem (1958-1963).

In the first (the monarchy era), patriotic versus Arab nationalist arguments were used to justify Iraqi alliance with Britain while in the Qassem period, communists, who

constituted the main source of support for the regime, advocated democratisation and independent development of Iraq as opposed to giving priority to Arab unity.

Baathist officials, who say they are aware of Iraqi disillusionment with pan-Arab nationalism, argue that such sentiments were compounded by the failure of Arab and particularly Palestinian leaders to fulfill their pre-war pledges to retaliate against Western interests if and when war erupted.

In the first days of the war, ordinary Iraqis who were interviewed by the Jordan Times in Baghdad were contemplating Palestinian and Arab attacks

(Continued on page 5)

Iraqi reparations — how would it happen?

By Galina Vromen
Reuter

THE HAGUE — International legal experts are starting to grapple with the complicated mechanics of how Iraq might be made to repay the enormous damages stemming from its invasion of Kuwait.

Kuwait has already estimated its own damages from the occupation at \$100 billion. The United States and Britain have told citizens to start filing claims for damage or destruction of businesses and property.

At the United Nations, a U.S. preliminary draft resolution for a permanent Gulf war ceasefire suggests a fund be created to meet war compensation claims against Iraq. Into it would be paid an unstated percentage of the value of Iraq's petroleum exports.

A commission would be set up to administer the fund, and the U.N. secretary general would be asked to present recommendations within 30 days on ways of paying the compensation.

But the draft of the resolution obtained by Reuters is extremely complicated and likely to go through several revisions in coming weeks.

Experts are meanwhile studying reparations procedures used after World War II, and the workings of the Iran-U.S. claims tribunal in the Hague which settles financial disputes arising from the 1979 revolution in Iran.

The legal groundwork for reparations was set in U.N. Security Council Resolution 674 which holds Iraq responsible for damages stemming from its invasion of Kuwait and calls on countries to file claims for financial compensation.

"The first big question is whether an agreement will be reached with Iraq on the (process for) reparations," said lawyer

Arthur Rovine, agent for the United States when the Iran-U.S. tribunal first opened in 1981 and now in private practice in New York City.

Most experts say Iraq is in such dire straits — it was \$90 billion in debt even before the war — that it is unrealistic to expect it to pay massive reparations that could further destabilise the country.

"There may be some sort of symbolic reparation, but there is no way they will really be able to pay up," said Terry Gill, a professor of international law at Utrecht University.

If Iraq refuses to discuss any payments, the allies could use frozen Iraqi funds abroad to compensate some claimants.

Mr. Rovine said official sources had told him four to five billion dollars of Iraqi assets were frozen worldwide, about one billion dollar of that in the United States and a similar amount in Britain.

Since most of the assets are in the West, it is unlikely that citizens of other countries — particularly the many guest workers who lost their life's savings — would ever get compensation by that route, experts said.

"Frozen assets would cover just a fraction of the claims. If we can get or impose an agreement with Iraq, more possibilities would open up," Mr. Rovine said.

With Iraq's agreement, there are several scenarios for how reparations could work.

The U.N.-backed International Court of Justice in the Hague could be asked for an advisory opinion reinforcing U.N. Resolution 674 and on the amount Iraq should pay, said Peter Koojians, professor of public international law at Leiden University.

But other experts do not favour that course.

Reparation claims could be handled in bilateral negotiations

between Iraq and countries demanding compensation, probably with arbitrators from neutral nations.

Once a total sum for each country was agreed, a national commission could decide how to distribute the money among claimants. That method was used after World War II with arbitrators from neutral countries taking part.

Or the example of the Iran-U.S. claims tribunal in the Hague might be followed. The tribunal, with three neutral judges and three each from the two countries, allows individuals and companies as well as the two governments to bring their case.

The tribunal was set up under a treaty that freed 52 U.S. hostages in the American embassy in Tehran in 1979 and has resolved more than 4,000 cases so far, with U.S. claims most being met from frozen Iranian assets.

The tribunal was started with the help of the Permanent Court of Arbitration housed in the same complex as the International Court of Justice. It could again be asked to be helped form a tribunal.

Hans Jonksman, secretary general of the arbitration court, while stressing that no-one had yet asked the court to help, told Reuters it could make available physical facilities, staff and expertise for setting up a tribunal or bilateral commissions.

"The new situation with Iraq is far more complicated than the situation that led to the Iran-U.S. tribunal because there are more than two countries involved," Mr. Jonksman said.

Mr. Gill said the anti-Iraq coalition countries may not want a tribunal because it could put Iraqi claims for civilian damage from allied bombing on an equal footing with their own claims. "A tribunal might just not be practical," Mr. Rovine said.

Bush says Iraqi changes show Saddam still 'calling the shots'

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. President George Bush Saturday brushed aside a government shakeup in Iraq as a move that shows Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein is still "calling the shots".

The president said the United States could not restore normal relations with Baghdad while Saddam Hussein remained in power.

"I would simply say that Saddam Hussein appears to still be calling the shots," Mr. Bush said at the White House following talks with Turkish President Turgut Ozal at Camp David, the presidential mountain retreat.

"As I have said before, normal relations with the United States cannot be effective with Saddam Hussein still calling the shots, still in power."

President Saddam appointed a 24-man government, bringing in seven new ministers and making Deputy Prime Minister Saadoun Hammadi, a Shi'ite Muslim, Iraq's prime minister — a position President Saddam had held.

Baghdad Radio reported that crowds turned out to greet the new prime minister when he visited towns in Southern Iraq.

Mr. Hammadi toured the provinces of Najaf and Qadisiyah, areas of post-Gulf war unrest, Baghdad Radio said. Baghdad says it has crushed the rebellion.

Mr. Bush said he and Mr. Ozal discussed the shakeup "at length" but concluded, "there are some interesting cabinet shifts, but nothing that appears to depart from Saddam Hussein's policies."

Iraqi opposition leaders in Syria scorned the new cabinet, saying President Saddam should step down "before it becomes too late."

"The revolt against Saddam will continue regardless of his false promises of Democracy and freedom," said Hassan Al Nakib, a former Iraqi general who is now a leading opposition figure.

Mr. Bush disputed speculation that the United States was trying to apply pressure on Iraq by refusing to let it fly fixed-wing aircraft to use against insurgents. Two Iraqi jets have been shot down for violating ceasefire conditions.

"It was stated from the very beginning that they ought not to fly their aircraft," Mr. Bush said, and I think they've learned now not to fly the aircraft."

Neither Mr. Bush nor Mr. Ozal would predict how long President Saddam would be able to remain in power, with unrest reported throughout Iraq. "It's difficult to make an estimate," Mr. Ozal said, adding "but it's difficult for him to stay."

Mr. Bush insisted, "it's for us to try to see what will follow on in Iraq," then said he hoped a new government "would be one that could work very compatibly with the Western powers... and live happily ever after without threatening its neighbours."

"We're looking for somebody that is going to lead that country in the ways of peace," Mr. Bush said.

During two days of talks at Camp David with Mr. Bush, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, Mr. Ozal explored the possibility of additional U.S. economic and military assistance.

The Bush administration has already provided Turkey with \$82 million in emergency military assistance in addition to \$553 million in the 1991 foreign aid budget. It has proposed increasing the 1992 allocation to \$703 million.

Congress Friday gave final legislative approval for an additional \$200 million "to help offset Turkey's losses in the war. A White House official said Mr. Bush was expected to sign the bill that contains the aid.

The two leaders also discussed Cyprus, where Turkey has backed the Turkish Cypriot community with troops since a 1974 invasion that led to a breakaway state in the island's north.

The United States has been trying to promote a solution for the divided island, so far without success. U.N.-sponsored talks between Greek and Turkish Cypriots stalled a year ago.

Turkey has agreed in principle to allow the United States to store conventional ammunition inside its borders for use during a possible future crisis in the Middle East.

Washington has been concerned about the length of time it took to ship arms and equipment into the Gulf region to deal with Iraq's invasion of Kuwait back in August.

Prowling U.S. jets told not to shoot down Iraqi helicopters

RIYADH, (R) — American pilots patrolling over Iraq have been told not to shoot down helicopters unless they approach allied forces, U.S. commander General Norman Schwarzkopf said Saturday.

He said Iraq, battling post-Gulf war revolts, had sharply reduced the use of armed helicopters after a ceasefire meeting with allied commanders last Sunday at the Iraqi town of Safwan.

The allied commanders warned the Iraqis against using helicopters to attack rebels. Gen. Schwarzkopf's remarks to reporters indicated that the orders to U.S. pilots might change.

Rebellion in Iraq is now strongest in the Kurdish north, hundreds of kilometres from the allied ceasefire line in southern Iraq.

Under a provisional ceasefire the victorious allies banned all flights by Iraq's fixed-wing aircraft. U.S. pilots shot down two SU-22 fighters caught in the air this week.

The rules for helicopters are more complex. Transport flights by helicopter are allowed but

Washington has refused to say precisely what is forbidden.

Gen. Schwarzkopf spoke to reporters after a presenting British Gulf war commander, Lieutenant-General Peter de la Billiere, with the Legion of Merit on behalf of President George Bush.

The use of armed helicopters has decreased rather dramatically since the meeting we had the other day. They're using helicopters predominantly to move troops around the battlefield and that sort of thing," Gen. Schwarzkopf said.

"The armed helicopters are not going to be a threat, plain and simple," Gen. Schwarzkopf said. "We've made it very clear to them (Iraq) that the helicopters will not fly towards, over or near our forces and they won't — not for long."

Pressed on whether Iraqi helicopters were safe unless they approached the allies, Gen. Schwarzkopf replied:

"I can't say that. I would say that at the present time my instructions are not to take any action against armed helicopters."

After the Gulf war, Baghdad faced unrest in south and north. Iraqi forces counter-attacked first in the south, using tanks and heavy guns to regain control of most cities, some of them only a few kilometres from allied troops occupying a huge slice of south-west Iraqi desert.

The south is the heartland of Iraq's Shi'ite Muslim majority. The northern rebels are Kurds, a non-Arab people forming 20 per cent of Iraq's population of 17 million. Kurdish rebels say they have been repeatedly attacked by helicopters.

Gen. Schwarzkopf said no new U.S. combat troops would be sent to the Gulf in the coming weeks and those that remained — about 440,000 — would go home as quickly as possible.

"We might have to bring some logistic folks... its going to take a long time to get all this equipment out of here. But there's not going to be any rotation of combat forces," he said.

"One day longer is long for those kids out there in the field. They want to go home and I don't blame them — I want to go home," he said.

Hizbollah for freeing hostages if Israel releases prisoners

BEIRUT (Agencies) — The pro-Iranian Hizbollah said Sunday it was keen to see the release of Western hostages, as were Iran and Syria, but it linked their freedom to the release of Arabs in Israel.

Hussein Musawi, a senior official of Hizbollah (the Party of God), told Reuters in a telephone interview: "Everyone is interested in ending this matter, but in the right way."

"The brothers in the Islamic Republic (of Iran) and the brothers in Syria are concerned in liberating the hostages but surely in a just manner."

"The Americans have hostages, and the (Lebanese) Muslims and nationalists have hostages and detainees in Israel. Therefore, all this should be resolved together and it there is a tendency to do that then it will be resolved."

"There are detainees here and those are detainees there. All those unjustly held should be liberated," he said.

Mr. Musawi's comments, also given to the Associated Press, followed a flurry of Lebanese newspaper and radio reports of an imminent release of some of the 12 Westerners held in Lebanon by extremists loyal to Iran.

Beirut newspaper reported early last week hostage release were imminent but some admitted Saturday they had been wrong and blamed unspecified last-minute hitches.

Mr. Musawi is thought to influence the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, the group that holds U.S. educators Jesse Turner and Alann Steen.

Hizbollah is believed to be parent movement of the extremist pro-Iranian factions that hold most of the hostages. They include six Americans, four Britons, two Germans and an Italian.

The longest held of the captives is American journalist Terry Anderson, chief Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press who was kidnapped March 16, 1985.

"During my recent trip to Iran, I felt Iranian desire to resolve the issue of the hostages," Mr. Musawi told the AP. "I felt that they would spare no effort in influencing the groups that hold the hostages to free them."

"I also know that the Syrians have always been keen on wrapping up the hostage issue," he added.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS IN BRIEF

Turkey: Water not a political weapon

ANKARA (R) — Turkey, which controls one of the Middle East's mightiest rivers, will never use water as a political weapon, State Minister Kamran Inan said Saturday. "In the coming 10 to 15 years water will become more vital commodity in the Middle East than oil," Mr. Inan told the semi-official Anatolian news agency. "We see water as a means of cooperation... not as a political weapon or a means for political pressure. We did not consider (using it as a weapon) during the (Gulf) war, we will not consider it in the future," Mr. Inan said. Turkey's diversion of the Euphrates River for a month last year to fill the lake behind its new Ataturk Dam led to a dispute with the downstream states of Iraq and Syria. Ankara said it made up for the shortfall by releasing before the cut more than 500 cubic metres of water a second agreed under a 1987 protocol with Damascus. Turkey says its 1987 proposal of a "peace water pipeline" to carry water to Middle East and Gulf states from its southern Seyhan and Ceyhan rivers can be a base for future stability and economic cooperation in the region.

Indonesia to check pilgrimage facilities

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia, whose nationals accounted for over a third of the deaths in a tunnel disaster near Mecca last year, will send an advance team to prepare for this year's Hajj pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia, the official Anas news agency said Sunday. It quoted Religious Minister Munawir Sjadzali as saying the team would in particular look at preventing a repeat of last July's disaster when 1,400 pilgrims died in a crowded tunnel close to the Holy City of Mecca. The Saudi response at the time, terming it an act of God, caused considerable resentment in Indonesia, which is home to the world's largest Muslim population. A Saudi Arabian humanitarian group in January promised to provide compensation to the 630 victims' families. About 50,000 Indonesian Muslims have so far registered to go on this year's pilgrimage.

Bombs explode in Istanbul

ANKARA (R) — Bombs damaged the stock exchange building and two banks in Istanbul during the night but caused no casualties, the Anatolian news agency said Sunday. It said one bomb exploded before midnight, damaging the entrance to the Istanbul stock exchange building and a brokerage house in the same premises in the waterfront Karakoy district. Soon afterwards bombs damaged branches of two private banks. Is Bank and Yapi Kredi in different parts of the city, it said. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. The outlawed Dev-Sol (Revolutionary Left) group, which said it was behind Friday's killing of an American businessman in Istanbul, claimed it planted six bombs which blasted six banks and offices, most with U.S. connections, the previous weekend.

Libya astonished by Ethiopia's expulsion

NAIROBI (AP) — Libya says it is astonished by Ethiopia's expulsion of its ambassador and another Libyan diplomat from the Horn of African nation and will investigate the action. In a statement published by the Libyan news agency JANA and broadcast on state-run television, Libya expressed its "astonishment and ignorance of the reasons behind the Ethiopian authorities' measure." The Saturday broadcast said that according to political analysts in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, Libya was suspected of arming Ethiopian rebels who have won two provinces and advanced to within 140 kilometres of the capital in a month-old offensive. Libya, which has denied any involvement with the insurgents, said it had "initiated a rigorous investigation to find out the heart of the matter."

Doctors in Sudan urged to charge less

KHARTOUM (R) — A cabinet minister has called on doctors in Sudan to charge less in their private clinics. The Khartoum daily Al Guwat Al Mussallah said Sunday that the cabinet affairs minister, Colonel Ali Tayeb Mohammed Khair, himself a doctor, told specialists employed at the Health Ministry that their fees for private patients were too much. He told the doctors their work was a humanitarian duty and they should charge more reasonable fees. Doctors in Khartoum, where the minimum monthly wage is 300 Sudanese pounds (\$66), charge patients at least 100 pounds (\$22) a visit.

44 dead in Morocco bus crash

RABAT (R) — Forty-four people were killed and 18 were injured in a collision between a bus and a car on a Moroccan highway near Tangiers Saturday night, Moroccan Television reported. Five of the injured were seriously hurt, the TV said, quoting rescue workers at the scene. No further details were immediately available.

U.S. businessman charged for Libya deal

MIAMI (R) — U.S. authorities have charged a Miami aircraft executive with illegally shipping aircraft parts to help repair a fleet of Libyan transport planes. Duane Egli, 58, who appeared briefly in court in Miami on Friday, was ordered held without bail pending a hearing in U.S. district court. He is accused of violating a presidential order on trading with Libya. The U.S. Customs Service, in a statement to the court, accuses Mr. Egli also of planning to supply mechanics to repair the fleet of C-130 Hercules aircraft and to rent one as a flying command post for Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi. Mr. Egli was said to own an aircraft repair firm in Belgium, Flandere Aircraft and Maintenance, and Liberman World Airways. The U.S. customs statement said fame made the deal through a Libyan middleman in Switzerland. Mr. Egli was arrested on Thursday by federal agents in Miami.

Israel on summer time

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israelis moved their clocks an hour ahead at midnight Saturday to start a 160-day period of daylight savings time. The extra daylight is expected to save the country millions of dollars in energy costs, but has long been a source of controversy in Israel, where religious Jews object to the uncomfortable exchanges it makes in their prayer schedule. Jewish law mandates that morning prayers be uttered at daybreak, making it difficult for many religiously observant Jews to go to synagogue at dawn and then get to work on time. By a compromise struck several years ago, the government curtails summer time early by turning the clocks back again before the Jewish new year or Rosh Hashanah holiday. This year, the clock switches back on Aug. 31.

Guns hamper relief work in war-devastated north Somalia

BERBERA, Somalia (R) — Fresh from its victory over government forces, the Somali National Movement (SNM) is finding it hard to keep the peace and ensure that foreign relief organisations can work safely in devastated northern Somalia.

"Guns seem to outnumber people by about 10 to one in these parts. It's a big problem how to get them off the streets," said SNM Vice-Chairman Hassan Jama Isa.

The International committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), one of the few foreign aid organisations in this rugged, sparsely-populated region, temporarily pulled out last Thursday after three men

stole one of its last vehicles at gunpoint.

Its 19 foreign staff were running a hospital for war wounded in the Red Sea port of Berbera as well as monitoring treatment of prisoners of war and helping to restore essential services, such as water.

Speaking to visiting journalists last week, Mr. Hassan Jama said the SNM was now getting down to the massive task of reconstruction and doing its best to ensure relief organisations could operate safely.

The SNM, which has been fighting the government since mid-1988, overran northern Somalia two months ago. Its vic-

tory coincided with the overthrow, by another rebel group, of President Mohammad Siad Barre in the capital Mogadishu.

Thousands of young men were armed for the SNM's campaign and former rebels, now idle, still swagger with their weapons around northern towns.

"They have been brought up to fight and they don't really know how to do anything else," said ICRC surgeon Robin Gray in Berbera hospital, now in the hands of local Somali doctors.

Fighters from both sides fill wards that spill out onto a courtyard.

The ICRC kept the hospital running throughout January's fighting, even though at one point SNM and government troops raged through the operating theatre and a doctor was hit by a bullet and badly wounded.

Looters struck the ICRC's warehouse in Berbera and most of its cars were stolen.

The ICRC had hoped to signal to other aid organisations that it was possible to work safely in northern Somalia. Its decision to leave, while pledging to return as soon as possible, was a blow to relief efforts.

"We need every human need. We have inherited nothing," said Hassan Kayd Abdulle, SNM chief in the town of Burao, 100 kilometres south of Berbera. "We have captured nothing but destruction."

Cities like burao and Hargeisa, the capital of the region, were once thriving livestock trading centres. Viewed from the air, Hargeisa is now a vision of catastrophe with roofless houses stretching over the arid plain. Thousands of tonnes of iron roofing were carried away by residents fleeing the fighting.

No high level of toxic gases yet in Gulf region

RIYADH (AP) — Preliminary results of an American study indicate toxic gases have not yet reached a danger level in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, U.S. officials said.

Between 500 and 600 Kuwaiti oil wells were set on fire allegedly by Iraqi troops, blackening the sky and raising fears that toxic fumes would poison the atmosphere.

According to a U.S. embassy official, a nine-member team including representatives from the Environmental Protection Agency, the centres for disease control and the U.S. Public Health Service have been monitoring air quality in the area for the past two weeks.

The official said the team was conducting both air quality tests and epidemiological studies in Riyadh, Dhahran, Kuwait City, and Camp Freedom in Kuwait to determine if there are serious

health risks. "Even as close as 100 metres from some of the fires, the preliminary results show no particularly high levels of toxic gases," said the official.

The team has also surveyed hospital emergency room admittance officials and has discovered no significant change in the number of respiratory complaints before and after the fires were set.

The embassy official stressed, however, that the studies have not yet determined the effect of particles small enough to lodge themselves in lungs.

"They don't have the equipment here," he said. "They need to bring their results back to the states."

He also noted that while the preliminary results unearthed no immediate acute reaction to the toxins "we just don't know what the long-term effect will be."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

PRAYER TIMES

06:12 Fajr
06:30 (Sunrise) Duha
11:42 Asr
15:11 Maghreb
19:11 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swetfish Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624990
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Teremanta Church Tel. 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541

Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 628543
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 711331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261
Syrian Orthodox Church Tel. 771751
Assiuta International Church Tel. 683326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811255
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 654932

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

It will be partly cloudy and winds will be northerly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moder-

ate and seas calm.

	Min/Max temp.
Amman	6 / 14
Aqaba	15 / 25
Desert	6 / 17
Jordan Valley	13 / 25

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 11, Aqaba 22. Humidity readings: Amman 95 per cent, Aqaba 34 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abdul Majid Al Sha'er 791405
Dr. Mufeed Tansous 854480
Dr. Wa'el Dumas 774800

Dr. Tawfiq Qab'is 632029
First pharmacy 661912
Rendow pharmacy 78336
Al Azem pharmacy 637055
Nairohki pharmacy 63672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 649495
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660

IRBID:
Dr. Abdul Majid Sababhin (—)
Al Sharna' pharmacy 273825

ZARQA:
Dr. Hussein Mahmoud (—)
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

AMMAN:
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate

Rescue 690341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rouse Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 680321
Hotel Complaints 609800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 102020
Central Amman Telephone Repair 667279
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111

Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 63681
RJ Flight Information 08-53300
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 642816
Alkhalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 643441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642662
Mathas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 6641734
Shmeisani Hospital 669121
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musader Hospital 667279
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/77
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6641646
Italian, Al-Muhajira 777101/3

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Al-Ahli,

Jordan, Algeria agree on ways of tackling post-Gulf war issues

ALGERIA (J.T.) — The Algerian government has displayed full understanding of the Jordanian political stand vis-à-vis Arab and international issues, and Amman and Algiers have agreed on means of confronting the post-war era, according to Foreign Minister Taher Al Masri.

In a telephone call with Radio Jordan Mr. Masri, who Saturday arrived here for a two-day visit, said that the Jordanian position, which is well known to the Arab countries, has not changed and the Jordanian government advocates the idea of Arab countries embarking on preparations for the coming stage.

"Jordan's position with regard to the Palestine question remains unchanged and Amman believes in the need for coordinating Arab countries stands with regard to this important issue," the minister said.

Mr. Masri had visited Libya before going to Algeria in the course of a tour of the Arab Maghreb Union countries. He said that his trip was designed to boost inter-Arab solidarity in the post-war era and to pave the

ground for the March 30 meeting at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo.

In his telephone conversation with Radio Jordan, Mr. Masri said he had discussed with the Libyan and Algerian foreign ministers the situation in Iraq, and it was agreed that the Arab states should help safeguard Iraq's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Commenting on the outcome of his visit to Libya, Mr. Masri said that Jordan and Libya have agreed on means of dealing with the coming stage. Amman and Tripoli, he said, are about to witness a new chapter in their relations based on bolstered economic and political cooperation.

The Arab League meeting in Cairo, the first to be held in the Egyptian capital after the transfer there of the headquarters of the Arab League from Tunis, is expected to tackle many issues facing the Arab World in the wake of the Gulf crisis.

Following his tour in the Maghreb Union, Mr. Masri is expected to go to Yemen and Syria for similar talks.

Ship harassment still goes on in the Red Sea

AMMAN (J.T.) — A cargo vessel laden with goods imported from northern Europe has been intercepted by the naval forces of the U.S.-led alliance while on its way to the port of Aqaba and turned away back, according to an official for the Jordan National Shipping Lines.

He said that the vessel was heading from north Europe towards Aqaba carrying containers with goods imported by Jordanian merchants when it was intercepted for inspection. He said that when inspection could not be done on board, the vessel was ordered to head for Suez in Egypt for proper inspection of the containers.

The incident, which occurred Friday, March 22, was the latest in a series of incidents in which vessels with Jordan-bound cargo were turned back and forced to

dump their shipments at Jeddah, in Saudi Arabia, or Egyptian ports where a great deal of the goods were either stolen or sold in auction without their owners' knowledge.

According to the Shipping Agents Association (SAA) in Jordan, the interception of ships is still being conducted by navy vessels from the United States, France, Spain and Greece.

SAA President Tawfiq Kawar told the Jordan Times recently that some of the containers on board vessels are normally shipped at the bottom of the hold making it impossible to be opened and the contents checked unless taken overboard for inspection.

Many vessels with Jordan-bound goods stopped coming to Aqaba Port since the start of the hostilities in the Gulf region.

JNRCS, U.S. team raise aid for Iraq

AMMAN (J.T.) — A team representing the U.S. Earth Steward Organisation and the Gulf Humanitarian Relief arrived in Amman Sunday on a two-week visit to Jordan, during which they will visit refugee camps in Jordan and meet with people from the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS).

The team brought in a tonne of basic medicine and a quantity of baby milk, in addition to cash assistance, which the organisation's members raised from the United States.

The team's assistance is the first shipment of aid to Jordan, which will receive further aid on a monthly basis.

Jordan is the first victim of the Gulf crisis after Kuwait and Iraq, according to reports by the United Nations officials, who came to Jordan to ensure Jordan's observance of the U.N. sanctions against Iraq and assess the situation in the Kingdom.

In the meantime, a team from the JNRCS Sunday left for Baghdad. The team took to Iraq 43 tonnes of drugs and medical supplies as well as food donated by citizens and humanitarian organisations.

The team comprises representatives of the Gulf Peace Team, the Quakers and the Mennonites.

Saturday a convoy of trucks carrying 200 tonnes of food and drugs, donated by Jordanian citizens, left for Baghdad. The shipment was organised by the General Union of Voluntary Societies.

Jordan seeks new produce markets

AMMAN (J.T.) — In view of the loss of its traditional markets in the Gulf, Jordan is now looking for new markets, mainly in Europe, where to sell its agricultural products, according to Minister of Agriculture Mohammad Alawneh.

"We have been selling limited amounts of products in Europe, but this is to be increased. We have also made contacts with Iran with a view to selling its agricultural products," said the minister in a statement to the Jordan News Agency, Petra.

"Indeed European markets are more stable than those in the Gulf, and they are being contacted by the ministry through the private exporters in Jordan and through a number of organisations affiliated to the ministry," Mr. Alawneh said.

The Ministry of Agriculture, he said, is now applying the slogan: "We eat what we grow" and has embarked on measures to increase production, especially of cereals, which are in great demand in the Kingdom. To achieve this goal the ministry is leasing land to Jordanian agricultural engineers who can best develop the land for cereal production.

The state-owned land, including that in the Jordan Valley, he said, is being offered for development in exchange for nominal fees, and the ministry is providing agricultural requirements to help in the production process.

"Indeed, we are moving from theory into practice and applying our policies in word and deed," the minister added.

Referring to the noticeable rise in the prices of vegetables and fruits during Ramadan, the minister said that crops are now being produced during the transitional period between the winter and the summer and they are limited in quantity. In addition, he said that some people are now buying three times the amounts they used to buy before Ramadan, making it impossible for the suppliers to meet the demand; hence the rise in the prices.

Referring to the crops brought in from the occupied Arab territories, the minister said that Jordan had opened the door for agricultural products from the Arab producers of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, according to the local markets needs, and is allowing olive oil to pass through Jordan on its way for export to other countries.



Three days of heavy rain have turned a public park into a pool (photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Storm, rain bring death toll to eight

AMMAN (J.T.) — The death toll from the storms and the heavy rains in the southern regions of the Kingdom Sunday rose to eight, with the Civil Defence Department (CDD) reporting Sunday that three citizens in the Karak region had drowned.

Local press reports and eyewitnesses said earlier that five people were killed and 80 others were injured as a result of landslides and road accidents as well as the collapse of bridges, mainly in the Tafleeh and Karak regions which took the brunt of the storm that ended Sunday.

Tafleeh and Karak received more than 120 millimetres of rain in just 48 hours, the highest level in the Kingdom, according to the Meteorology Department.

Reports said that 50 families in the Wadi Mousa and Wadi Al Mujib areas were rescued from the streams.

In Maan, 14 citizens were rescued by CDD men who also took to safety the passengers of 30 cars which were cut off by the rising levels of the water.

Also in Maan, water inundated 50 homes, government departments and warehouses.

In Karak, reports spoke of bridges and culverts being washed away and agricultural projects sustaining severe damage as a result of the storm.

CDD officials said that bridges over roads in the Wadi Hammad and Wadi Al Abiad were damaged, while the main bridge at the approaches of Karak sustained severe damage that led to the abruptness of traffic.

In the areas of Maan, Tafleeh and Karak unspecified numbers of farm animals were lost and trees were uprooted as a result of the rising level of water.

Schools and community colleges as well as Muta University, which is near Karak, remained closed Sunday while CDD teams were joined by units from the Jordanian Armed Forces in the rescue operations. Work on repairing roads, bridges and restoring water and electricity supplies was underway.

No new laws for cars of expatriates

By Nur Sadi
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian expatriates and Palestinians who lived in Iraq and Kuwait before Aug. 2, have had a hard time since the crisis, but exemption of taxes for customs duty on their cars has taken a load off the expatriate back.

"We have been very lucky in that aspect because, as far as I know, nowhere in the world does a country waive customs," said a Jordanian at a gasoline station in Wadi Saqra.

The customs in Jordan range from 100 per cent to up to 300 per cent of the car list price, depending on the car (engine) size. According to officials, "because the customs is so high and because the expatriates lost all their belongings and money, we cannot force them to pay."

However, the expatriates have been paying road tax, according to the official, which gives them the right to use Jordanian roads. This ranges from JD 20 or JD 30 up to JD 55 every three months, depending on the engine size.

"I pay JD 37 every three months, Khaled, a Palestinian

said with a smile that implied "I am glad I only have one car." He added: "I am afraid though, that Jordan may impose customs on our car. Of course I would like to go to Kuwait but now I do not think of going."

Rumors that expatriates will soon have to pay customs have been circulating strongly and have brought fear and confusion as to what is "the best of two evils."

"To go back to Kuwait and face the problems or to stay here (in Jordan) and not be able to pay?" asked Abdullah who is the owner for three cars.

But a Jordanian official maintained this rumor holds no ground. "Nothing new has happened. We are not forcing the expatriates to pay. If they (expatriates) decide to stay in the country, that is another matter and it becomes a national decision and the government should take a stand. But there is nothing new."

No precise figure is available on the number of cars with the Iraq-Kuwait licence plates, but one estimate put it at 12,000. Another official said there are tens of thousands of such cars.

Jordan braces for resuming key role for Iraqi food imports

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The lifting of international sanctions against food exports and some other essentials to Iraq is expected to spark a run on food reserves in the Jordanian market pending the actual arrival of Iraq-bound imports, businessmen and officials say.

At the same time, it also means increased business for many sectors and a partial revival of the Kingdom's dormant transport sector, which was mostly dependent on Iraq's imports through the port of Aqaba.

The U.N. Sanctions Committee's decision on Friday to ease the sanctions against Iraq, imposed after its Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, "is a welcome development which will not only alleviate the suffering of the Iraqis but will also revive Jordan's commercial sector," said Mamdouh Abu Hassan, head of the Jordan Businessmen's Association.

Officials, meanwhile, denied reports that Jordan had stockpiled vast amounts of foodstuff at its warehouses in anticipation of the lifting of the sanctions.

"It is true that some items which were bound for Iraq had been kept back because of our adherence to the Sanctions Resolution, and these will be released now," said one official. But there is no truth in reports that the Kingdom's stores are full of products to be sent to Iraq.

The Sanctions Committee, in its decision Friday, lifted restrictions on essential goods to Iraq and agreed to ease the ban on fuel, generators and spare parts to repair war purification equipment, operate vehicles and make humanitarian aid effective.

The committee, however, said it would still have to be informed of food shipments but would not have to give advance approval of each consignment.

A steady stream of relief supplies — food, water, medicine and fuel — has been flowing to Iraq from Jordan in coordination with international and local agencies such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent, but nowhere near the actual volume of requirements of the 18 million Iraqis.

Foodstuffs from Iran, Turkey and Syria could also be found in the Baghdad market but at very high prices. With the easing of the embargo, market prices are expected to gradually go down — one of the key priorities of the Iraqi government.

A senior Iraqi official has emphasised the need to arrange quick deliveries of food to the country. "It is important that there should not be any delay in the measures to lift the embargo on food supplies, because any delay... would inflict harm on our people," Baghdad Radio quoted Vice-President Taha Mohamed Ma'arouf as saying late Saturday (it was also an official confirmation that Mr. Ma'arouf, a Kurd,

retained his post as vice-president in Saturday's reshuffle of the government in Iraq).

In view of the strain in Iraq's relations with Iran, Turkey and Syria over the civil unrest as well as the situation on the ground in the north, Jordan is the key route for Iraqi imports.

Mr. Abu Hassan expressed hope that the naval task force in the Red Sea enforcing the sanctions on Iraq would ease its procedures of inspecting goods bound for Iraq and allow for quicker despatch of supplies to Iraq.

"Much depends on the attitude of the naval force in the Red Sea," he said. "They could delay shipments if they want to by raising technical questions related to the cargo. But I hope that they understand the seriousness of the situation in Iraq and act accordingly," he told the Jordan Times.

Many Jordanian importers have already established contact with European and Far Eastern suppliers for goods to be sent to Iraq. "We have given the green signal for the loading of foodstuff onto three ships at three different ports, and we expect them to dock at Aqaba by April 10," said a prominent Jordanian importer. "Of course, we have to go by the regulations and procedures set up by the U.N. and we will be doing so," he added.

Another businessman expected the Iraqi government to act through Jordanian banks and

middlemen, in view of the freeze imposed on Iraq's foreign bank accounts and assets and of the devastation of the Iraqi telecommunications system, to get its requirements of food and other essentials.

There is no indication whatsoever of Iraq's ability to pay in cash for its imports and whether it has enough foreign exchange to facilitate imports.

In any event, much depends on how soon the U.N. moves to organise a mechanism to supervise supplies to Iraq as demanded by the Sanctions Committee.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which has been spearheading the international relief effort for Iraq, said it would continue its present activities until the U.N. sets up a system in place to oversee relief supplies to the embattled country.

"We work in emergency situations as well as where nobody else is doing the job," said Werner Kaspar, the chief ICRC delegate in Amman. "There is no doubt that an emergency exists in Iraq and our traditional mission is of extending assistance to hospitals and health services."

"Our parallel effort — that of sending food, water and other supplies — will continue until the U.N. establishes its system to supervise the process," he said. "And then our focus will shift to our traditional mission."

Glass factory expects export boost

By Elia Nasrallah
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The glass factory near Amman last year produced 10,000 tonnes of tinted glass, 80 per cent of which was exported to Arab and foreign countries, but the coming two years are expected to witness a great boost in exports, according to company Managing Director Farhi Obeid.

"In fact, the Gulf crisis created immense obstacles in the path of glass exports, especially to the Arab countries in the Gulf, but the company is compensating the loss of these markets by selling more to the African Arab states," Mr. Obeid told the Jordan Times.

"We are now selling tinted glass to Egypt, which takes up to 40 per cent of the total production. Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Sudan, and last year we sold 15,000 tonnes of broken glass to Luxembourg, earning \$1 million," Mr. Obeid said.

"The Jordanian market does not need the broken glass, only plain and tinted glass, but European countries do need this product," he said.

"Plans are under way for selling up to 90,000 tonnes of broken glass to Luxembourg which, like other countries, use the product in industry in the manufacture of fibre glass and in road pavement among other uses," Mr. Obeid added.

"The shipment of Jordanian glass sold to Libya, Egypt, Sudan and Tunisia are sent via ferry boats that travel from Aqaba to Nuweibeh, in Sinai, where they are carried to their destination by trucks," Mr. Obeid explained.

"80 per cent of the total amount of raw materials used in the manufacture of the glass comes from sites near or around the factory near Maan, 300 workers and engineers, all Jordanians, are mostly from the southern regions around Maan," Mr. Obeid said.

He said that due to the harassment of ships in Aqaba the glass factory is now importing the remaining 20 per cent of materials via Syria.

According to Mr. Obeid, the glass factory is now taking steps to produce fibre glass, which has a wide market in Jordan and abroad, and a local company is expected to submit a feasibility study on the project before further action can be taken.

Mr. Obeid also said that the glass factory was going ahead with plans to produce vials and other glass products, like bottles, plates, water glasses and ashtrays, and a feasibility study is expected to be conducted once the bids of eight foreign firms have been completed and submitted. Mr. Obeid expected the feasibility study to be ready in two months.

"The glass factory is now conducting maintenance work without interruption to the production lines," he said.

Mr. Obeid said that the glass factory sustained losses in the past year, as a result of the loss of the Gulf markets and the embargo imposed on Iraq and Jordan during the crisis which prevented the factory from exporting or importing raw materials.

In 1989 the factory made a JD 1.5 million profit and this year there is a great hope that the factory will make big profits. The factory, he said, sold glass estimated at JD 4 million down from JD 5 million as average in the past years.

Andreotti

(Continued from page 1)

in the 1970s, yet it signed the Camp David accords for peace with Egypt.

Egypt's Foreign Ministry issued a statement Sunday saying Israel's policy to increase settlements on the occupied territories raises doubts about the Jewish state's desire to reach a peaceful solution in the Middle East.

The statement, attributed to a responsible source at the ministry, said:

"The Israeli government's continued settlement activity will increase tension in the occupied Arab territories and undermines sincere efforts currently exerted to push forward the peace process in the Middle East."

The source was commenting on recent reports in the Israeli media that hardline Housing Minister Ariel Sharon intends to build 12,000 housing units on the occupied West Bank.

"This news makes us wonder especially because it comes at a time when all forces seeking peace are pushing for a settlement based on justice which would guarantee the Palestinian people's national rights including self-determination," the statement said.

Bridges timings changed

AMMAN (Petra) — King Hussein and Prince Mohammad bridges on the River Jordan open at 7 a.m. instead of 8 a.m. as of Sunday (yesterday). The new measure was implemented following the shift to summer time by the Israeli occupation authorities.

Rebellion

(Continued from page 1)

abroad claim the rebels have seized nearly all Iraq's Kurdish region.

Avotollah Khoei said: "It is clear for all Muslims that killing a Muslim and looting the properties of Muslims is an unacceptable act. As a Muslim I cannot approve it."

"As a Muslim, I did not and cannot approve such acts," he said. He said he had asked President Saddam to issue a general amnesty for rioters. "This attitude was carried out by ignorants. This (the amnesty) would be a favour for this people — an amnesty was requested to be issued covering all those who possess arms and asking them to give up their arms."

During the journalists' tour in Najaf, no rioting was seen. Many government buildings and institutions were destroyed or severely damaged. People criticised the anti-government forces. "They are hoodlums motivated by egoist ill-intentions and personal enmities," said a middle-aged woman shopper.

Others said that rioters were supported by Iran, which denies intervention. "I have seen two pick-ups (trucks) with Tehran plate numbers distributing arms among rioters," another said.

Governor Abdul Rahman Al Douri told reporters that the rioters had infiltrated from Iran where they received weapons. He accused them of having attacked hospitals, murdering patients. "They have even killed children, innocent children, imagine," he said.

The rebels claimed Sunday the Iraqi president was reinforcing Baghdad with units of his loyal Republican Guard following hit-and-run raids and anti-government protests there. Opposition sources, speaking in Damascus, also reported fighting in Iraq's second city of Basra in the south, its third largest city of Mosul in the north and Najaf and Karbala.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

Islamic centre honoured

AMMAN (Petra) — The University of Jordan's Documentation and Manuscripts Department has received an award from the Islamic History, Arts and Culture Research Centre in Istanbul, Turkey, in appreciation of the Jordanian centre's efforts aimed at conserving and preserving important historical documents. The director of the Islamic centre in Istanbul expressed, in a letter he sent to the director of the centre at the university, his thanks for and appreciation of the centre and voiced hope that cooperation between the two centres would be enhanced.

Sudanese honour Crown Prince

KHARTOUM (Petra) — A Sudanese doctor has set up a special medical compound, named after His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan. Col. Doctor Babakr Abdullah, who established the compound, said that Prince Hassan had made a great contribution towards establishing this compound. He added that Jordan had promised to train Sudanese cadres, who will be working at the compound. He said that the first phase of the compound was about to be completed thanks to the great support the compound executives are receiving from the Sudanese National Salvation Front, he said. Col. Babakr also said that the medical compound would perform major operations such as the removal of tumours, transplant of pacemakers, lung operations, removal of artery blockages and transplant of arteries.

Arabiyat opens Ramadan market

AMMAN (Petra) — Speaker of the Lower House of Parliament Abdul Latif Arabiyat Tuesday opens Ramadan's charitable market, which will be held in the Amman International Car Exhibition hall.

JLA organises book exhibition

IRBID (Petra) — President of Jordan Library Association (JLA) Anwar Akroush Sunday opened a book exhibition organised by the JLA. The four-day exhibition is aimed at raising contributions for Iraq.

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An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation.
Established 1975
مؤسسة جريدة عربية سياسية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

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Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.
Telephones: 667171/6, 670141-4
Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO
Facsimile: 661242

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

When it rains, it pours

HEAVY rainstorms during the past 72 hours raised to about the annual average the amount of rainwater which Jordan expects each year, and as such they have brought with them a blessing for our people and the whole water-thirsty region. But, on the other hand, the rains have brought with them suffering and misery for many who actually prayed for their fall, especially in southern regions of the Kingdom where reports say at least eight people drowned and more than 80 were injured as well as others who are missing. In addition, vast areas of agricultural land are reported to have sustained heavy damage as did many agricultural installations, while many of the culverts and the bridges built over the roads and streams in the south were washed away by heavy floods and raging streams. The inhabitants of low-lying areas had to be rescued and evacuated to safer ground, while farmers lost many of their livestock, according to the reports. While admitting that natural disasters like this one are bound to happen without giving us enough time to avert them, one can only point out that since rain can be considered a normal phenomenon and an annual occurrence in winter time, it is only reasonable to think and to say that precautionary measures concerning people inhabiting low-lying areas could have been taken. Maintenance of roads, bridges as well as culverts and other facilities to drain away the rainwater and prevent flooding could be done on a regular basis before the winter season in anticipation of floods. Apart from the loss of life, the country which has replenished its aquifers and reservoirs behind the dams has sustained damage estimated at millions of dinars. The concerned parties like the ministries of public works, and municipalities, the Civil Defence Department as well as farm owners themselves are to blame for failing to take proper action in this regard; and, if anything, the loss because of the storms points to lack of coordination among these parties who are confronted with the same situation year after year. They should realise that it takes only a little investment in time before the rainy season to save a great deal later on. The Civil Defence Department in particular has got to get its act together since they were many claims over the past two days that emergency help failed to reach outlying areas in the south and there were persistent reports yesterday that several people stranded there could not be reached or rescued until late last night. It is not enough to demand that the government compensate the farmers and other citizens for their losses as a result of the damage they sustain due to weather conditions as has been the practice so far and as has been demanded by some writers in the local press. What is badly needed now is awareness as to the need of addressing the situation, and practical steps to help us avoid a repetition in the coming seasons.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

THE Gulf war officially ended with the destruction of Iraq's economic and social infrastructure, but Washington's war on Iraq is far from over, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Sunday. America's war on Iraq has entered a new phase represented in starving the Iraqi people and forcing the Iraqi leadership to give up arms and weapons with which it can defend the Iraqi people, the paper noted. Despite the elapse of several weeks following the ceasefire in the war, the U.N. Security Council has not yet reached a resolution on a formal ceasefire that would give Iraq a breathing space, the paper pointed out. It said that the United States is determined to obstruct any resolution on a ceasefire because it wants to impose its own humiliating conditions on the Iraqis and render Baghdad helpless. In contrast, the United States is not demanding from Israel the same conditions about its own weapons, it is condemning Israel's continued occupation of Arab lands in Palestine and is not taking any steps towards implementing U.N. Security Council resolutions concerning Palestine, the paper noted. The paper called the readers attention to this situation and also to recent Israeli leaders' statements that they would give up no land in return for an end to the state of war with the Arab states, and they would never recognise the rights of the Palestinians in their homeland. It said that the Arab countries ought to take joint action now to put an end to Israel's arrogance, and enable the Palestinians to regain their own rights in implementation of Security Council resolutions.

The veil that concealed the true face of Iran has at last fallen to reveal that it is ruled by a tyrannical political party that has been hiding its true nature behind Islam, claiming to be the only advocate of religion in the whole world, says a columnist in Al Dostour daily Sunday. Mohammad Daoudieh says that the Muslims of the world had been hoping that Iran would come to the help of the Iraqi people in their plight and in their confrontation with the great satan, but what happened was that Tehran rushed after the war to get a piece of cake, and when it was denied that it turned to its own means of ensuring its role in Iraq. The writer says that the Arab and Islamic worlds were shocked to hear about the Iranian actions, and their stabbing in the back of the Iraqi people after the Gulf war. The Iranians have not only sent in their trouble makers with arms to cause disturbances in southern Iraq, but have now announced their refusal to return Iraqi planes and pilots; and is taking a hostile stand vis-a-vis Baghdad in a flagrant act of treachery, the writer continues. Indeed, he says, the Tehran leadership has proved to the world that it is turning the Iranian nation into one that can only follow in the pattern of other countries that embody conspiracies and acts of intimidation among other tactics to achieve its own goals.

Weekly Political Pulse

Time ripe for international conference

ONE truly wonders what does Washington see to be so objectionable in the holding of a U.N. Security Council-sponsored conference on the Middle East that it keeps pushing the ideas away.

The now famous excuse for rejecting the conference idea has been coined time again as a time factor in the sense that time, we are told, is inappropriate to convene such a meeting. Such an explanation does not really hold much water in view of the fact that 24 years have passed since Israel began its occupation of Arab territories and its annexation of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, if anything, time is overdue and not inappropriate. What is worse, from the time factor point of view, is that Tel Aviv has frustrated every conceivable peaceful attempt to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict beginning with the Dr. Jarring mission in the late sixties to U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's own desperate initiative a couple of years ago.

Against such a backdrop and in the light of Israel's continued rejection of every conceivable initiative, surely time has become ripe and propitious to push ahead for a solution to the Palestinian case and the broader Arab-Israeli conflict in a more forceful and determined manner. It so happens that a meeting between the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict under the aegis of the U.N. Security Council can provide the very mechanism to proceed expeditiously with the task of solving once and for all the decades-long conflicts of the Middle East. When all fails, Washing-

ton and the other capitals with clout should be prepared to entertain such an operational mechanism as provided by the conference idea under the U.N. umbrella, rather than shun it away. As the parties to the conflict are projected to pursue their own respective bilateral negotiations under the broad umbrella of the conference, there can be no harm whatsoever in giving the international conference forum a chance to succeed when everything else had been tried and failed till this point in time.

Washington and Tel Aviv are the only two capitals which are still on record as opposing the convening of an international conference on the Middle East. This harmonisation of positions between the two countries cannot be coincidental or fortuitous. More likely than not, the U.S. negative vote on the idea is due to the Israeli rejection of the very notion of being crammed into an international conference under the spotlight of the international community for fear of becoming accountable to the international community for every untenable position that it takes in the negotiating process. If Israeli fears about the conference can be dispelled, then Washington can be talked into accepting the international conference principle. When that big order is accomplished, then, no doubt, Washington, would remove its reservations about holding such a conference. Or one can proceed to address this opposition to the conference methodology the other way around, namely, to convince the U.S. first about the functionality and usefulness of the

conference mechanism as a prelude to soliciting Israel's endorsement of this route for the settlement of its conflicts with the Arab parties.

Whatever is the scenario adopted to rectify the U.S.-Israeli anomaly on the Security Council's sponsored peace talks, time is anything but inappropriate to proceed ahead with full speed to end the problems of the Middle East. This does not suggest that time cannot be taken or should not be taken to conduct the necessary preparatory work for convening the elusive conference. On the contrary, preparatory work would be necessary before a full-fledged conference on the Middle East could be held. What is urgently called for now is the decision to hold 'such international negotiations and then to begin the process of preparing for the conference including the framework of its agenda and the breakdown of negotiations on topical basis or otherwise. The main thing is to take a formal decision on holding a conference and that would serve as a stimulus for the additional decisions that need to be taken to make the conference idea a success.

The sticking point will always be to win at least Tel Aviv's acceptance of negotiating peace with the Arab parties under the umbrella of U.N. Security Council if not its blessings. Without Israel's wholehearted acceptance, the conference idea is doomed before it even begins.

By Waleed Sadi

Glaspie tells her version of meeting with President Saddam

WASHINGTON — Iraqi president Saddam Hussein was convinced last July that the United States would go to war in the Gulf if necessary, but he may have believed he could win, the U.S. ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, said March 21.

"I'm absolutely sure that he knew that we would fight... I think it is quite possible he truly believed he could beat us," Glaspie told the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East. The "sycophants around Saddam" were trying to prove Iraqi weapons could compete with American arms, she said.

Glaspie said she repeatedly warned Saddam Hussein last summer against using violence to settle his border dispute with Kuwait. "I told him our policy was that we would defend our vital interests," she said. "We did not realise he would be so foolish as to ignore our repeated and crystal clear warnings... I don't take comfort that everybody else that I was working with in Baghdad, including the Arab ambassadors, came to that same wrong conclusion."

Her testimony March 21 was scrutinised by congressmen, some challenging and others defending the administration's policies on Iraq before its Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

Representative Lee Hamilton (Democrat of Indiana) cited a series of administration statements to try to show the United States gave conflicting signals. Hamilton said that after Iraq had massed troops near the Kuwaiti border, U.S. officials had stated publicly that the United States had no defence commitments with Kuwait and that if force were used Washington would be extremely concerned.

"It is a record that confused me. If it confused this subcommittee... it is not unreasonable for me to think it might confuse Saddam Hussein as well," Hamilton said.

Representative Tom Lantos (Democrat of California) said that despite Hussein's massed 30,000 Iraqi soldiers on the border of Kuwait, there was a "persistent theme by the State Department that this man can be dealt with... You tell us that you were sure that Saddam Hussein

knew that we would move militarily... Very few people were sure that we would move militarily, on this committee or in this country," Lantos said.

But Glaspie said Saddam Hussein clearly indicated that he understood the U.S. position in his two-hour meeting with her at the Iraqi presidency July 25. "He railed against what he believed we were threatening" — American militarism, neo-imperialism, fleets in the Gulf — "in a whole series of comments," she said. He had clearly "decided on that day or the day before, for the first time, that we really would fight if we had to," she said. "Saddam had no question in his mind. I'm absolutely convinced of that."

Glaspie said that in their only private meeting, barely one week before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, the Iraqi leader abruptly abandoned his tirade after he held a 30-minute telephone conversation with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Returning to the meeting room, Saddam Hussein gave "an unconditional pledge" not to use force against Kuwait — a pledge later repeated to her by two top Iraqi officials on July 28 and 29, Glaspie said.

Glaspie said the extraordinary turnaround came after Saddam Hussein "complained to me for one hour about fleet movements and American neo-imperialism and militarism." He made "a long list of points," many of which appear in the Iraqi version of the meeting, Glaspie said. She said she was about one quarter through responses to that list "when he left the room, went to speak to the president of Egypt, and came back and in effect said 'We're not going to do it. It's all over.'" Glaspie said that when she attempted to respond further to his charges, he said, basically, "I want you to leave."

Chronicle the events leading up to the extraordinary two-hour exchange, Glaspie said that on July 18 the Department of State in Arab

July 18 the Depart of State in Washington publicly and privately warned Iraq in a written policy statement that the U.S. would continue to defend its interests in the region. Glaspie said she personally delivered the U.S. policy statement to the highest Iraqi official available to her in Baghdad, Deputy Foreign Minister

Nizar Hamdoun.

On July 24, Glaspie said, at the request of the government of the United Arab Emirates, the U.S. announced a joint military operation in the Gulf. "At midnight that night I was convoked, and protests were made. I was asked if it was also true that our fleet had redeployed," Glaspie recounted.

That morning, (July 25th), when the Foreign Ministry officially opened, Glaspie said, she returned with a statement by State Department spokesman Margaret Tutwiler in which the U.S. called for a peaceful settlement of Iraq's disputes with its neighbours. "Iraq and others know that there is no place for coercion and intimidation in a civilised world," read the Tutwiler statement which Glaspie handed to Deputy Foreign Minister Hamdoun.

"I asked that if it hadn't already arrived at the presidency — that it be taken there immediately. About an hour later, I was called to see the president," Glaspie recounted.

"Now, during that meeting, did he say specifically he would not use force... or invade Kuwait?" asked Hamilton.

"Yes, sir," Glaspie replied. "And that was not a conditional statement of any kind. It was just a flat, clear, plain statement: We will not invade Kuwait, is that correct?" Hamilton pressed.

"There certainly is no question (of conditionality) about it," Glaspie responded.

She pointed out that not only she but President Mubarak and Saudi Arabia's King Fahd confirm identical understandings in separate conversations with Saddam Hussein. Moreover, she said, two different Iraqi ministers, including Hussein Kamel, on July 28 and 29, "said flatly, 'We are not going to use troops.'" "But you never said to him (Saddam Hussein), 'Mr. President, if you go across the line with your forces into Kuwait, we will fight,'" Hamilton asked.

"Absolutely not. I did not need to say that. If I had felt that I needed to say that, I would have asked the (U.S.) president — after the meeting — for permission to say that," Glaspie responded. "I have no doubt in my mind that he knew that we meant business. And certainly, it's up to

the (U.S.) president, not up to me, to decide how to execute the policy."

In her testimony to the House subcommittee, Glaspie was asked whether she was aware that after the Iraqi transcript was made public on Sept. 11, an unidentified senior State Department official was quoted in The New York Times as having said it was "essentially correct."

She said she did not know who said that or why. She said that the official perhaps meant the "context" was generally correct, but that, as far as she was concerned, about 20 per cent of the content was either distorted, falsified, or dropped.

Asked by Representative Steven Solarz (Democrat of New York) if she would now object to having the cable reporting her meeting with the Iraqi president turned over to the Foreign Affairs committee on a classified basis, Glaspie said she would object.

"In my 25 years in diplomacy I have not been personally aware of a case where any government — no matter what the temptation — has issued such a transcript, other than Saddam Hussein's government," said Glaspie. "The reason, of course is credibility."

Solarz challenged Glaspie's objections. "I would hope the chairman at some point will consider the possibility of issuing a subpoena to obtain the cable, in the event it's not possible to get it through more friendly means," he said, "because I think these points could have been cleared up without breaching diplomatic confidentiality."

"I think the State Department did a very serious disservice to the president's own efforts to counter this (Iraqi) exercise in disinformation and also a fundamental disservice to Ambassador Glaspie," Solarz noted later.

"I guess if I weren't so angry, I'd find this whole thing hilarious," Representative William Goodling (Republican of Pennsylvania) interjected. "If Saddam Hussein had any question in his mind as to where we stood in the United States, it had to come from 535 members of the Congress of the United States — not the administration or anybody else, because we micro-manage all the time."

— U.S. Information Agency.

U.S. administration seeks to destabilise Iraqi leadership

By Charles Aldinger
Reuter

WASHINGTON — Despite U.S. promises to keep out of Iraq's domestic turmoil, analysts say the downing of two Iraqi warplanes by American jets this week signalled a firm push for the ouster of President Saddam Hussein.

Defence and political experts said Washington doesn't want to be seen as meddling in the power struggles of war-shattered Iraq but is anxious to see Saddam gone and an end to the bloody rebellion against him after the Gulf war.

"We are tightening the screws," said Jim Blackwell of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, one of several analysts who said the downed Iraqi planes appeared to pose no military threat to U.S.-led allied forces.

The United States told Iraq as a condition of the ceasefire terms agreed March 3 that it must keep its combat aircraft on the ground or risk having them shot down by allied forces, which still occupy 15 per cent of southern Iraq.

The allies ousted Iraqi forces from Kuwait in a six-week war that ended in four days of ground fighting in late February. As of Friday, U.S. aircraft had not attacked the combat helicopters the Pentagon says Iraq is using against Shi'ite rebels in the south and Kurdish insurgents in the north. But analysts interviewed by Reuters said America's message was made clear enough in the downings of an Iraqi SU-22 jet on Wednesday and another on Friday.

"Saddam has only two choices: Use his air force and tanks to beat the rebels, or wind up losing," said Former U.S. Assistant Defence Secretary Larry Korb. "We want him to go, but we don't want to pull the trigger."

"We are being very careful. The idea is to leave Saddam so weakened in the eyes of his people that he will seek safe passage out of the country," added Martin Indyk of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

Most experts said the attack jets downed by U.S. fighters over northern Iraq this week posed no

threat to U.S.-led allied forces occupying southern Iraq.

Blackwell commented: "I doubt we will attack his helicopters because they are much more difficult to track and get at. But the United States has voiced concern about use of the helicopters against the rebels and that may be enough."

Blackwell and other experts also noted that despite U.S. assurances of having no intention to intervene in Iraq's affairs, more than 100,000 American troops remain in southern Iraq pending a permanent Gulf war ceasefire.

"There is no doubt that the United States wants to increase pressure on Saddam to go and stop the killing of thousands of Iraqis by his military," said Middle East expert Shireen Hunter.

"We are tightening the screws. The idea is to leave Saddam so weakened in the eyes of his people that he will seek safe passage out of the country."

"This is not an ego thing between Bush and Saddam any longer," said Blackwell. "The U.S. leadership obviously sees Saddam as a continuing barrier to stability in the region, no matter what follows him."

History suggests that even if Saddam goes, Iraq's internal politics will be far from stable for some time.

"It's a country with a violent history. The Kurds aren't going to cooperate with the Shi'ites, and the Shi'ites can't control Iraq because the country simply is not a fundamentalist one like Iran," said Fouad Ajami of the Johns Hopkins Foreign Policy Institute.

Several experts said a Red Cross announcement Friday in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, that 58,000 Iraqi prisoners of war will soon be sent home could be another major problem for the regime.

"If those folks join in any fighting at home, it won't be on Saddam's side," said Korb.

The core issue of a new world order

By Anthony Nutting

WAGING war against Iraq may be a risky business for the West. But winning the peace could be infinitely more dangerous. We all know what should be done to secure a peace settlement in the Middle East now the war is over. But is there really the will to do it?

The omens are, to say the least, not promising. True, the Americans have incurred a substantial debt to their Arab allies in the war against Saddam Hussein. But on top of all their existing commitments to Israel, they have also run up a large debt to the government of Yitzhak Shamir for its forbearance under fire from Iraqi missile attacks on Israeli cities. And all our experience over the last four decades of the Zionist influence in the U.S. Congress leaves us in no doubt as to which of these debts will be repaid and which dishonoured when the time comes.

Add to this the fact that the PLO, by backing Iraq from the

start of the current confrontation, has forfeited whatever small sympathy it might hitherto have enjoyed in Washington, as well as alienating their Saudi, Egyptian and Syrian supporters and paymasters; and the chances of adequate pressure being put on Israel to concede justice and independence for the Palestinians appear slim indeed. Washington's silence in the face of Shamir's recent reaffirmation that Israel will boycott any international conference on Palestine and his introduction to the Israeli cabinet of a party leader dedicated to the expulsion of Arabs from Palestine is not an encouraging sign.

Appearance of hypocrisy It is difficult not to feel cynical when President Bush declares that a new world order will be fashioned out of the carnage and chaos of the Gulf war. Much the same pious hopes were expressed by Britain at the time of the Suez war in 1956. Yet apart from the

'Camp David accord between Israel and Egypt, which left the Palestinians worse off than ever, nothing was done to make the Middle East a safer place.

On the contrary, Israel has been allowed, with complete impunity, to occupy the West Bank for over 20 years and to wage war against Lebanon for the past ten, all of which makes the American stance over Kuwait appear highly hypocritical to vast numbers of Arabs, not least to King Hussein.

It may be that, now the war is over, the victors will seek to draw up plans for a security arrangement for the Gulf area and for removing the threat of nuclear and chemical weapons. But if it be thought that these arrangements should include a continued Western military presence in the Gulf — as the Israelis have said they want — it would be well to remember what happened to the Baghdad Pact when, two years after Suez, our oldest and closest Arab ally, Nuri Al Said, paid with his life for his devotion to Britain in a revolution which

swept away the Iraqi monarchy, destroyed the Pact and set in motion the train of events that culminated in the ascendancy of Saddam Hussein.

The fact is that, whatever security arrangements the victors may seek to create in the Gulf region, the dangers of a backlash of Arab nationalism and Muslim fundamentalism will be more than just a possibility if at the same time nothing is done to bring about a just settlement for the Palestinians. For this has always been and, until it is resolved, will always be the core issue of the Middle East.

Retribution ahead?

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf emirates took a grave risk when they appealed for American forces to defend them against Iraq following the occupation of Kuwait. So did Egypt, Syria and Morocco when they sent in their troops. For in the eyes of the Arab masses the Americans are virtually synonymous with their

sworn enemy Israel. And however heinous Saddam Hussein's alleged crimes against Kurds and Kuwaitis may be, the Arab states in the coalition are regarded as having sold their souls to the devil by making common cause with American 'imperialism' in an attack on their Arab brothers in Iraq.

Thus, if when the dust of battle clears, the Americans make no visible effort to bring about a just settlement for the Palestinians, the political map of the Middle East is likely to be changed out of all recognition and changed to the detriment, if not the eradication of all Western interests in the Arab World. From Morocco to Muscat the existing regimes could be swept away, as was that of Nuri Al Said in Iraq, in retribution for their having aided, abetted, financed and played host to the American and British 'imperialists,' in what will be seen as yet another attempt to impose Western domination on the region.

Whether or not Iraq will

have been destroyed in the conflict, Iran will then emerge as the paramount power in the Gulf region and throughout the Arabian Peninsula where Islamic fundamentalism will reign supreme. Western oil interests will be sequestered and OPEC will be subject to the dictates of the Ayatollahs in Tehran, a situation even more unpredictable and hazardous for the industrial nations than if Saddam Hussein had been left in possession of Kuwait.

The Middle East has always been a dangerous area, more especially since the creation of the state of Israel at the expense of the Palestinians. If a just peace does not follow what the allies regard as a just war, it could become more dangerous still for the West and ultimately for Israel as well.

Sir Anthony Nutting was minister of state for foreign affairs, 1954-50, when he resigned over the Suez crisis. His article is reprinted from the London-based Middle East International.

Egyptians continue to fight for human rights

By George Shadrouti

CAIRO — If information released by the Egyptian Organisation of Human Rights is correct, Dr. Mohammed Mandour's nightmare began just before dawn on Feb. 8 when Egyptian state security officers came to his house and demanded to question him.

Over the next two weeks, Mandour was imprisoned, detained without charges, routinely tortured and threatened with death if he reported his mistreatment to the press. Mandour's only "crime" seems to have been his association with the Palestinian Red Crescent's Palestine Hospital in Cairo, where he headed the psychiatric department.

As a result of efforts exerted by the EOHR and Amnesty International, among other human rights advocates, Mandour was finally released on Feb. 23.

Mandour's ordeal is one of a series of incidents that has created grave concern in Egypt that President Mubarak's regime — particularly as a result of tensions in the Gulf — is growing increasingly repressive.

In addition to the detention and torture of Mandour, the EOHR, whose 1,000 plus members cover the political and ideological spectrum, cites the government's response to

student protests at Cairo University.

Thousands of students were protesting the American-led ground war on campus when government troops, using plastic bullets, opened fire. Local papers reported that one student was killed. The EOHR says it has the names of four victims. In either case, it was the first time in more than 40 years that the government used live ammunition against students, said Bahy Al Deen Hassan, general-secretary of the EOHR.

The EOHR also charges Egyptian security forces of systematically arresting and torturing Muslim fundamentalists, journalists, Palestinians and human rights advocates, with a recent emphasis on those who opposed Egypt's participation in the Gulf war.

Ironically, such actions have been taking place at a time when much has been made of Egypt's movement towards greater freedom and democracy. Under the Mubarak regime, opposition parties and the press have been allowed to criticise the government openly (provided they do not attack Mubarak directly). The dismissal of the previous minister of interior, the controversial and brutal Zaki Badr, brought a sigh of relief from many in Cairo.

Egypt's recent elections were widely perceived as the freest ever held in the country.

While many attributed this "freedom" to the boycott of the elections by major opposition groups, they nevertheless hoped it was a step towards more genuine democracy. As if to underscore that hope, Mubarak was named the winner of a prestigious French human rights award a month later.

One of the most troubling aspects, Hassan said, is that the circumstances under which force or torture are used seem to be broadening. Mandour, a member of EOHR's board of trustees, has never advocated violence or challenged the government, Hassan said. And not even when his regime was rocked by protests at Cairo University in the late 1960s did Gamal Abdul Nasser, Egypt's charismatic president of the 1950s and 1960s, allow police to use lethal force against students.

"This is a critical moment in Egypt," Hassan said. "What will happen in the next weeks or months, I don't know. I hope the situation will improve."

Saad Eddin Ibrahim, a sociologist at the American University in Cairo and a long-time observer of Egypt's political and human rights development, said it is in times of great stress that the government overreacts.

This was the case towards the end of the Gulf war and in

October after the assassination of Rifaat Al Mahgoub, speaker of parliament. But he added that Egypt still compares favourably with most other countries in the region.

"You don't have executions or people disappearing," he said. "Egypt by Middle East standards seems alright. But by my own standards as a human rights advocate, it leaves a lot to be desired."

The methods of torture are gruesome and extremely painful for the victims. Beatings with whips and sticks are common.

Prisoners are subjected to electric shocks on sensitive parts of the body. Some have been strapped to an aroosa — an Egyptian cross — and then beaten. Others have had their hands and feet tied behind their backs only to be suspended in doorways until they lose consciousness.

Mandour himself was subjected to repeated beatings and electric shocks applied to his sexual organs. A lawyer for EOHR who was finally allowed to visit Mandour said there were black spots caused by electricity on parts of his body. His head also had been shaved.

Interrogators repeatedly questioned Mandour about possible links to Palestinian leaders and groups, according to information released by the EOHR. Dozens of other pris-

oners, including journalists who opposed the Gulf war, are being held without charges. All of this occurs even though Egypt is a signatory to several international conventions and resolutions prohibiting torture.

The EOHR, which has also sharply criticised opposition groups that advocate or incite violence, argues that the government can maintain security and enforce the law without resorting to methods that have become all too common since Mubarak took power in the wake of President Sadat's assassination in 1981. Even women and children have been victims of beatings and psychological terror.

To the government's credit, Hassan said, the EOHR has been allowed to hold press conferences and to level charges in the press. In addition, the government has promised to establish direct channels of communication between the ministry of interior, which is responsible for state security, and the group.

But one Egyptian human rights advocate, who asked not to be named, said there is widespread fear that the minister of interior has lost control of elements in the state security apparatus, the implication being that the controversial policies are directed from inside the executive branch — by people close to the president himself — Middle East Times.

Baathism

(Continued from page 1)

against U.S. and Western targets.

The military defeat seems to have also strengthened arguments by the traditional opponents of pan-Arab nationalism. These opponents, however, are not well organised and they are not expected to join any anti-regime coalition unless they feared that the alternative will be a conservative religious and sectarian regime, according to political observers.

There are no clear indications yet that views against Iraqi involvement in pan-Arab affairs have influenced the leadership's line. But, as one official says, it will be difficult for the leadership to rally support for a pan-Arab cause where Iraq would have to pay dearly for it again.

Dr. Hammadi's line seems to be different as he reportedly believes that Baghdad should not compromise its pan-Arab positions even if it could not be forceful in promoting it. "This stage warrants flexibility and we have to depend on diplomacy instead of violence," said one well-placed Baathist official. "But it is very unfair to blame the Palestinians and

their cause. We should not forget that the Palestinians everywhere have suffered a lot because of what happened recently (in the Gulf)."

Although it is misleading to talk about a definite political mood in Baghdad, judging by interviews, concern about the Palestinian cause is still expressed simultaneously by ordinary people including Shiites. "What will happen to the Palestinians now?" asked a Shiite in Al Kazimiah neighbourhood on the day after the ceasefire.

But how this debate will affect the future of the Baathist Party is too early to judge, even though criticism is certainly mounting against the party.

Officials argue that democratisation and reforms — with a possibility of wide dismissal of "corrupt" party operators — are relevant for the survival of the Baathist Party. Political observers in Baghdad expect party membership to cease being a major credential for government posts. "The emphasis will be on qualifications," one official promised.

Senior party officials are said to be very disappointed in the performance of many party members during the war.

Veteran Baathists, some of

whom have stayed away from the government apparatus as an expression of disillusionment, are now seen as important assets to be recruited to revitalise the party. Some are outside the country and others are sitting at home watching their ideals being torn apart, according to one of them.

But one such veteran Baathist said that he was ready to get involved in party activities again if that would contribute to saving Iraq and preventing "a puppet pro-U.S. regime" from taking over.

"We all have to contribute to the reconstruction of Iraq. But firstly opportunists and unqualified corrupt operators and officials should be removed or else there is no place for any decent people in the system," said the prominent writer, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The writer has just returned from a several-week stay in Iraq to cover the war and its aftermath.

Jordan Times
Tel: 667171

Prince

(Continued from page 1)

He said Iraq suffered 100,000 military casualties and an unknown number of civilian casualties in the war.

Hamami urges conference

In Washington, Jordan's Ambassador Hussein Hamami Sunday stressed the need to step up efforts to find a peaceful settlement of the Middle East problems.

In a meeting with the Writers Association in Washington, Mr. Hamami called for holding an international peace conference on the Middle East, attended by all parties to the conflict.

Mr. Hamami expressed amazement at the belief that Jordan's stand on the Gulf crisis was contrary to peace when the Kingdom was working out a peaceful solution since the outset of the crisis.

"I'm really at a loss to understanding why our attitude is contrary to peace," he said. "The thrust of our effort in the Gulf had been to achieve a peaceful settlement between Iraq and Kuwait; and we had it in our hand in the first 48 or 72 hours, but we were blocked."

"Now it may be too early to go into the details of what happened... it will come out clearly and we will be proven right that had we been allowed the opportunity to bring about that peaceful settlement, then the suffering of the Kuwaitis, the suffering of the Iraqis, the suffering of the region and the potential destabilisation... would have been avoided," he said.

Expulsions

(Continued from page 1)

of Palestinians expelled from their native land since the start of the uprising.

The Palestinians served with expulsion orders have been imprisoned for ordering and committing anti-Israeli "violence," the army said.

It said they were not directly involved in recent stabbings, but Defence Minister Moshe Arens accused them of inciting the atmosphere "that leads in the end to murder."

Their lawyer, Abdul Rahman Abu Nasser, said he would appeal the order Monday before a military review committee.

If turned down, the Palestinians can then appeal to Israel's supreme court. The high court has never overturned an army expulsion order.

The orders and growing violence were discussed for two hours at the weekly cabinet session.

Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan told reporters that Arab guerrillas should be executed, their homes torn down and their families expelled.

Another minister, Rehavam Zeevi, demanded a sweeping and permanent curfew throughout the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. He said such a curfew was imposed during the Gulf war, and during that time there were no killings.

Police Minister Roni Milo has proposed barring unmarried Palestinians from Israel, since most of the killings have been committed by Arabs without wives and children. Mr. Zeevi

dismissed the idea as "treating cancer with aspirin."

Mr. Eitan and Mr. Zeevi urged the cabinet to order the expulsion of known Palestinian leaders, and were backed by Housing Minister Ariel Sharon and Science Minister Yuval Neeman, Israel Radio said.

Operative decisions were delayed until Wednesday's meeting of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's smaller defence cabinet.

On Jan. 8, four Gaza Palestinians connected with the Muslim fundamentalist Hamas organisation were expelled to Lebanon following the stabbing of three Jews in a workshop outside Tel Aviv.

The U.N. Security Council voted unanimously on Dec. 20 to deplore the practice. The United States joined in the censure.

Visiting earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker reportedly sought confidence-building gestures from Israel including an end to expulsions.

The army said the four facing expulsion were under arrest and gave these details about them:

Three of them were released from Israeli jails in a May 1985 prisoner exchange with Ahmad Yibril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command.

They are Jamal Abu Habel, 33, Muein Msalam, 31, and Hashem Ali Dahlan, 31. All are from the Gaza refugee camp of Jabalya. The fourth, Jamal Abu Jadyan, 33, of the Gaza town of Beit Lahiyah, recently completed a 10-year prison sentence for planting bombs in the Israeli port of Ashdod.

Arab sources identified Mr. Habel as a grocer, married with four sons. Mr. Dahlan, married with two children, worked for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency.

International organisations team up to alleviate suffering of war victims

By Saeda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — "War is filthy, declares Michel Shroeder, press officer of the International Committee of the Red Cross. "There can be no humanitarian considerations in times of war, and it would be very difficult to render judgments on governments' violation of humanitarian rights."

Since the eruption of the Gulf crisis, more than 900,000 persons have been repatriated through Jordan, mostly by the International Organisation of Migration (IOM), but also by other humanitarian organisations, in addition to all Jordanians and other nationals who came back using their own means of transportation.

Humanitarian organisations have participated in helping Jordan following the government's appeal for international help. Their number at present exceeds 45, between local, international and non-governmental organisations.

However, in the first phase of the Gulf crisis, since August until November when the majority of evacuees flooded Jordan, most of the expenses of evacuation and accommodation were borne by Jordan. Only about \$15 million have been reimbursed out of the \$50 million the Jordanian government had to pay, according to a United Nations senior official.

"We are still trying to have the remaining expenses refunded," said Hans Einhaus, senior United Nations emergency manager. "However, it is a slow process."

Although all camps have been set up by various organisations expecting an enormous influx of evacuees, at present only 1,007 evacuees are in Jordan. International agencies, however, say they will still be "waiting" for new arrivals.

"We are still on alert for a possible influx," said Alfred Kotek, IOM's (International Organisation for Migration) director in Jordan. "We will definitely stay for a couple of weeks to see how the situation develops."

Among the remaining evacuees are 361 Somalis who have been waiting in Jordan since August due to instability in their home country.

"We have received reports that the situation in northern Somalia is calm at present," said Janvier de Riedmatten, chief officer of the UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees). "In fact, we have made sure, by a survey carried out on the Somalis left, that more than 200 desire to go back to their country. The others will join their families in other countries."

Iranians, on the other hand, are also waiting for a country to receive them. Fleeing the Iran-Iraq war in 1984, they have also left Iraq when the situation deteriorated. Some of them have already been repatriated to Poland and Norway. The others are still waiting for any country to accept them. "We want to leave to any country where we will lead a happy life, that is all we want," said a 30-year-old Iranian who left Iran in 1985, and whose father is being held in prison until

the son returned.

Amnesty International recently reported torture and arrest of many nationals in several countries "with no apparent reason other than their nationality." These included Yemenis in Saudi Arabia and Palestinians in Kuwait.

ICRC's officials say that they do their best "to inform the governments concerned and endeavour to protect the interests of all victims of war, be they prisoners, detainees, or civilians."

However, ICRC officials explain that they only make public statements concerning violations of international humanitarian law if these violations are major and repeated, and the steps taken confidentially have not succeeded in putting an end to the violations.

Senior United Nations officials confirm that, despite the fact that they cannot interfere in such a situation, they have taken initiatives and submitted reports to the secretary general on the actual ill-treatment and killings of Palestinians in Kuwait. However, "the Kuwaiti government is not in a position to control the situation," ICRC Shroeder said. "I think that the United States along with France and England are the ones who can put an end to this torture."

Shroeder said: "The absence of any 'supra-government' to assess the amount of violation of humanitarian rights make it difficult to force governments to implement international law. It would be difficult to know the extent of abuse inflicted on innocents. It is war and war is filthy."

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After long slump

Syria's economy improves

DAMASCUS (AP) — Visitors to Damascus these days no longer need to bring Syrian friends rolls of toilet paper as gifts because they were scarce.

The rolls are on sale at most stores — a mark of how Syria's economy, on the rocks until recently, is improving by the day and looks set to get healthier, although experts note that Syria still has problems to overcome.

Syrian economists and Western diplomats say the improvements are mostly the result of a decision to liberalise Syria's socialist economy, an increase in Syrian oil production, aid from Western and Gulf countries and more tolerance of smugglers.

A big hike in Western and Arab assistance, cut off for years because of Syria's radical policies, is expected because of Syrian President Hafez Assad's decision to support the anti-Iraq coalition which liberated Kuwait.

"The Syrians intend to exploit their new-found respectability to the hilt," analyst Charles Snow wrote in the respected Middle East Economic Survey.

Britain, which recently restored relations with Damascus after a 4-year break, has stopped blocking European Community aid to Syria and talks are expected to begin soon on loans worth some \$200 million.

Damascus restaurants now boast longer menus with food

items like "filet an Roquefort or chicken Marsala," dishes that were a rarity two years ago because cooks depended on ingredients smuggled from neighbouring Lebanon.

Some groceries have run out of shelves to store their local, imported and smuggled goods.

In most countries, none of this would cause anyone to blink. But in a country where only two years ago a box of salt was a luxury, such developments are rare.

"During my five years here I've never seen the stores so full," said a Westerner, who like other sources spoke on condition of anonymity.

The centralised control of the economy has hindered the Syrians' deep-rooted entrepreneurial skills and left the country with a deficit estimated at \$15 billion.

No official figures are available for Syria's foreign debts. But Damascus is believed to owe the West an estimated \$1 billion and the Soviet Union around \$11 billion, most of it for arms purchases to achieve "strategic parity" with Israel.

"Our aim is to open more and more doors... to lift restrictions and give more economic freedom so that the individual would feel that he can practise all kinds of economic activity with the minimum of restrictions," said Mohammad Imady, the minister for economy and foreign trade.

But the U.S.-educated minister admitted that it was not easy to introduce change in a country that has been the Soviet Union's protégé for more than three decades.

A Western diplomat said that Imady would like to speed up the liberalisation process.

"But that's impossible for now. His approach is Western while most of his colleagues have graduated from Moscow," he said.

Sull, Imady boasted that the measures the government introduced two years ago are paying off and said Syria's balance of payments registered surplus of 20.6 billion Syrian pounds for 1990 as opposed to a 1987 deficit of 12.7 billion pounds.

There are four sets of exchange rates in Syria. The official rate at 11.2 to the dollar, the encouraging rate at 20, the tourist rate at 40 and the black market at 47.

One Western diplomat noted that the surplus being quoted was artificial.

"It's just on paper because the 1989-1990 balance of payments includes exports to the Soviet Union for which Syria did not get paid because it was paying off its debt to the Soviet Union," he said.

Imady said private sector exports jumped from 3.37 billion pounds in 1987 to 21.1 billion pounds last year in response to

new incentives for exporters and the industrial and agriculture sectors.

He said the private sector has been allowed to import subsidised items such as sugar, tea and coffee — which sell for up to seven times the subsidised price on the open market — and pay for the goods in hard currency from overseas bank accounts.

In addition, exporters can now keep 75 per cent of the profit they make in hard currency and can use the money to import specific items or exchange it at the tourist rate of 40 pounds to the dollar.

Imady said that in addition to improving the economy, the new measures helped Syria absorb the Gulf war-related losses in remittances from Gulf states and tourism.

He estimated these losses at \$15.7 billion. But Western diplomats put the figure at closer to \$2 billion.

One diplomat said the losses were offset by the rise in oil prices during the war and the infusion of aid for aligning against Iraq, its main Arab rival.

Syria has recently received an estimated \$3 to \$5 billion in aid from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Japan and Western Europe.

There are no official published figures for Syria's oil production, but diplomats estimate it at 400,000 barrels a day.

Kuwait issues new dinar at par with old currency

KUWAIT (R) — Kuwait began issuing its new dinar Sunday at par with its old currency, setting the same exchange rate as on the eve of the invasion, central bank governor Sheikh Salem Abdul Aziz Al Sabah said.

The central bank set the new dinar at a middle rate of 0.28750 to the dollar and Sheikh Salem said the exchange rate would continue to be based on a basket of currencies reflecting Kuwait's main trading and financial partners.

He said the bank would try to hold the exchange rate steady for the first two months unless there was overwhelming market pressure.

"We will try our best for the first two months not to move our rate as before on a daily basis, unless the movement is quite sufficient (large)" he told Reuters in an interview.

The central bank would allow commercial banks to issue unlimited letters of credit for the commercial sector to import goods, he said.

Private cash withdrawals would be limited to 4,000 dinars per resident per month for the first three months, but the restrictions might be eased sooner, he said.

Transfers abroad by private individuals would also be limited to equivalent of 4,000 dinars per month at prevailing exchange rates.

Sheikh Salem said the limitations did not apply to cooperative societies and companies with

administrative expenses to meet.

He said the aim of the restrictions was to control the volume of cash in circulation to avoid inflation, to prevent a liquidity squeeze on the banks and to ensure Kuwaiti banks did not come under immediate pressure for foreign currency while they were finalising settlements with foreign banks.

Holders of Kuwaiti dinars abroad could take the money to Kuwait or correspondent banks and apply for approval to convert the money into new dinars, he said.

Once approved the money would be deposited in a special account at a Kuwaiti bank and would be subject to the same restrictions on withdrawals and overseas transfers.

Sheikh Salem said holders of old dinars had six months to convert their money to new dinars.

He said the restrictions on withdrawals and transfers were imposed for a minimum of three months but he hoped they could be relaxed sooner.

Hundreds of Kuwaitis queued to change old money for a new, post-invasion currency when banks opened Sunday for the first time since the Iraqis withdrew a month ago.

Men in traditional flowing robes and chequered headscarves and a few women swathed in black began lining up outside banks in war-ravaged Kuwait

City an hour before they opened.

The banks issued new dinars to replace banknotes in circulation before Iraq invaded Kuwait in August last year.

The change is intended to invalidate hundreds of millions of dollars of Kuwaiti dinars taken by the Iraqis during the seven-month occupation.

The crowd surged forward when the wooden doors of the main branch of the National Bank of Kuwait in the downtown financial district swung open at 10 a.m. (0700 GMT) but guards allowed only about 20 customers at a time to enter.

"Everyone is in a rush to finish his transaction. Otherwise there are no problems," Hanefir Hussein, the bank's executive manager, told Reuters.

Business appeared relatively orderly but slow. Many banks, largely undamaged in the occupation, did not have computer systems operating because there is no mains electricity and had to laboriously check written ledgers.

Only 56 of Kuwait's 180 bank branches opened Sunday. Many could not open because of staff shortages.

At the National Bank, clients pulled out piles of banknotes from packages and bags and handed them to the teller to exchange for a new Kuwaiti dinar — different coloured notes with the same design and value as the old dinar.

One old, bearded man angrily shouted and gesticulated when a

bank teller refused to give him any money. "There's no balance in his account and he wants to draw money," Hussein said.

The banks effectively ignored the Iraqi occupation, reinstating customers' Aug. 1 balances to give account holders who withdrew cash after the invasion an unexpected bonus.

Some clients thought the 4,000-dinar limit might be rather restrictive for Kuwait's wealthy sheikhs. But merchant Ali Al Qattan, 39, said it was enough for the time being. "There's nothing in Kuwait to buy now," he said.

Unlucky customers were left with bundles of worthless money. The central bank circulated the serial number of 357 million dinars (\$1.23 billion) taken from the bank's vaults by the Iraqis and ordered them not to accept them.

Qattan said he had some of this money. Civil servants had been paid with it during the Iraqi occupation and some Kuwaitis received it in payment for goods which they sold, he said.

Some residents were anxious to withdraw money to leave Kuwait, devastated by the war and still without water, electricity and public services in most areas.

Bank officials said there were many requests to buy dollars but none were immediately available.

Asked if the bank would accept dollars in exchange for dinars, one branch manager said: "Who in his right mind would want to change dollars for dinars today?"

Striking miners resist Soviet prime minister's call to work

MOSCOW (R) — Striking Soviet coal miners from Siberia to the Polish border said Sunday they were standing firm, showing no signs of giving in to the prime minister's request they return to work to save the sinking economy.

Miners' leaders in the big Siberian Kuzbass and Ukrainian Donbass coalfields said they were unimpressed by Prime Minister Valentin Pavlov's warning that the strikers were setting the tottering economy back "several years."

And they dismissed suggestions the miners were being manipulated by outsiders, an implied swipe by Pavlov at populist Boris Yeltsin and others who have sup-

ported strikers' demands for the resignation of President Mikhail Gorbachev.

"The general mood is to stand firm," said Viktor Osovsky, a member of the strike committee in the Donbass, where miners at about 60 pits have downed tools.

The independent Postfactum News Agency said miners in more than 165 pits, from Sakhalin in the far east to the western Ukraine, remained on strike at the weekend. Mines inside the Arctic circle and in the Urals heartland were also closed.

Pyotr Popov, a member of the Kuzbass strike committee, said the strike was holding across Siberia, adding that Pavlov's charges of outside interference ignored the democratic elections of mine leaders.

"Pavlov wants to change those strike committees ready to hold out with puppet committees who will do what he wants," Popov said.

The prime minister told Soviet television Saturday that continuing the strike, which broke out on March 1, would mean "that all of us, including the miners, will have to work for several years to repair the damage."

He said Soviet industry was receiving only 220,000 of the 340,000 tonnes needed daily to operate efficiently. "I would like to ask them to resume work by Monday at the latest."

But Kuzbass strike leader Papov said miners in the Siberian fields rejected Pavlov's assertion

they were to blame for economic hardships.

"If he is going to calculate, let him calculate properly," said Popov from the Kuzbass centre of Kemerovo.

"He should take the average miner's pay in the United States and then pay us the difference for the last 70 years. That would be the proper calculation," he emphasised.

Miners are among the best paid of Soviet industrial workers, but standards of living are appalling and work conditions are extremely dangerous at most mines.

The strike has caught the Kremlin off-balance as it tries to juggle exploding ethnic tensions and separatism in the republics and economic collapse across the country. Several vague attempts at negotiations have ended in failure.

And it has highlighted the chasm between Gorbachev and Russian President Yeltsin, once his protégé but now his greatest rival.

"They accuse me of supporting the strikers, but what (else) could I do? The strikers have political demands, the resignation of Gorbachev," Yeltsin told workers at the giant Kirov works in Leningrad Friday.

Hundreds of workers jammed into the hall responded by chanting "down with Gorbachev" and "resign, resign."

Last month, the Russian leader demanded Gorbachev's resignation and accused him of deceiving the people.

Oman ready to cut oil output if OPEC asks

DUBAI (R) — Independent oil producer Oman is ready to cut crude output to help raise prices if OPEC asks, Oil Minister Said Ben Ahmad Al Shanfari said in remarks published Sunday.

If IPEC (Independent Petroleum Exporting Countries) is asked by OPEC to contribute in oil market stability by cutting oil production, Oman will support such a move," Shanfari was quoted as saying by the Times of Oman daily newspaper.

Oman, the de-facto leader of the IPEC group — which brings together around 14 independent oil producing states — pumps around 700,000 barrels per day of crude oil.

The Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) agreed earlier this month to cut the group's total output by five per cent in the second quarter to avoid a fall in prices due to a glut in the market.

A news release issued March 12 after OPEC's ministerial monitoring committee said "the organisation calls upon other oil exporting countries to also shoulder similar responsibility by proportionally reducing their production levels."

Some members of the IPEC met with OPEC officials before OPEC's March 11 ministerial meeting.

IPEC's next meeting will be held in Cairo at the end of May.

Mounting subsidies expected to swell China's budget deficit

BEIJING (R) — Mounting bills to bail out inefficient industry, subsidise consumers and beef up defence will mean another big budget deficit for China next year, economists have said.

Then said the budget for calendar 1991, to be presented to parliament this week, would probably show a shortfall near the 8.9 billion yuan (\$1.7 billion) deficit estimated for last year.

The 1990 deficit is likely to surpass the budgeted figure, they added.

"There is no question there will be another big deficit next year," said a finance ministry official who asked not to be named.

"Revenues will fall well short of spending."

A deficit in 1992 would be the sixth in a row and the 12th in the past 13 years.

The shortfall is even bigger by International Monetary Fund calculations. Under China's quirky accounting practices, some foreign and domestic debt is treated as revenue, and last year that trimmed 33 billion yuan (\$6.3 billion) from the deficit.

China has been forced to earmark one third of all spending to maintain its woefully inefficient state industry and subsidise food, housing and other costs for workers. That percentage is expected to climb.

"We have had very little success in checking the rise in subsidies between of the need for social stability," said the official.

China was tried to keep inflation in check, partly out of fear of renewed unrest like the street protests that were crushed by the army on June 4, 1989. Those protests were aimed at speeding

political reform but surging prices in 1988 and 1989 contributed to the unrest.

Economists have said Beijing was buying social stability with subsidies.

"The figure to watch is the subsidies," said a Western economist, noting that a sluggish economy has increased this 'already heavy burden'.

Many state-run firms are technically bankrupt, unable to meet payrolls or pay taxes.

"The problem is, how do you collect taxes from companies that are losing money?" said a foreign diplomat. "There is nothing to collect."

China's economy went into a tailspin early this year as industrial credit was choked off to slow inflation. Banks have since pumped more money into the economy but consumers are still reluctant to spend their cash.

"Production is up but it's not being sold," said the diplomat.

Finance Minister Wang Bing-qian has signalled that Beijing would boost spending on defence as well as agriculture, education and science and technology this year.

"The generals are looking for more money to improve their weapons," said a source with close ties to the military. "There will also be a push to boost spending on the navy, which has been neglected in the past."

Last year the military won a 15 per cent rise in spending to 29 billion yuan (\$5.7 billion), according to the budget. Military specialists said much of China's defence spending was not included in the publicly announced figure.

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Opposition reports 80 dead in Mali clashes

BAMAKO (R) — More than 80 people have died in clashes between pro-democracy demonstrators and security forces in Mali, according to opposition and hospital sources who said Sunday that people were being killed indiscriminately.

The clashes which began Friday are the bloodiest since a wave of pro-democracy fervour swept Africa last year. They pose the most serious challenge to the one-party government of President Moussa Traore.

The pro-democracy forces, a loose coalition of students, professionals and civic leaders, planned a rally Sunday morning in the capital Bamako.

Demba Diallo, head of the Malian Human Rights League, said at least 80 people had been killed.

"That's the number we've counted so far but we'll never be able to find lots of the bodies," he said.

In the morgue at the Gabriel Touré Hospital in the city centre, doctors permitted journalists to see the charred bodies of five people burned beyond recognition.

"The military locked these people in a shopping centre and then set it on fire," one doctor said.

He said most of the dead, including 36 bodies from Friday and 39 were shot while they were running away," he said.

Diallo said talks between Traore and civic and religious leaders Saturday produced no breakthrough.

The government has had no comment on the violence for several hours but on Saturday it gave an official tally of 24 dead.

A second doctor said: "They are shooting at anything that moves... they even sprayed the front of the hospital with bullets."

A woman who was shot in the foot while she was walking to see

a wounded relative at the hospital said the shooting was random and indiscriminate. "I was just crossing the road and they just shot at me," she said.

The government has declared a state of emergency and imposed an overnight curfew. It has also said a congress of the ruling Democratic Union of Malian People will open as scheduled Thursday.

Traore has said the congress will consider demands for multi-party democracy, but many Malians doubt he is sincerely open to change.

The clashes have caused widespread destruction in the dusty capital. Vandals have looted luxury stores and protesters have sacked some government offices.

Senegal suspended train services Sunday between Dakar and Mali because of the unrest. It said the service would not resume until calm was restored.

S. African weekend township death toll reaches 17

JOHANNESBURG (R) — At least 17 people were killed in sporadic fighting at the weekend between rival black political factions in two Johannesburg townships, police said Sunday.

Residents of Alexandra, a shanty town of 200,000 people, reported hearing gunfire overnight around the township's migrant workers' hostel, scene in recent weeks of bitter factional warfare.

A police spokesman said 12 people had been killed in Alexandra since Friday night, three of them in a shootout and five more hacked and stabbed to death. He gave no details of the other deaths.

In Tembisa township north-east of Johannesburg, the bodies of two people who had been stabbed and hacked to death were found near a workers' hostel. Police had earlier reported three deaths from the area.

Security forces put up razor wire around the men-only hostel to try to separate rival factions.

The government has imposed a curfew on three Johannesburg townships to contain the warfare between Zulu migrant workers who support the Inkatha Freedom Party of chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi and township residents loyal to Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC).

Alexandra's Mayor Prince Mokoena told the Johannesburg Sunday Times that the fighting in his area started when a township resident killed a Zulu after fighting over a woman.

"The Xhosa man killed the Zulu with the help of his friends... when the Zulus heard that, the whole hostel came down and that's how it all began," said Mokoena, who is accused by the ANC of being an Inkatha sympathiser.

At least 1,200 people have died in the Johannesburg area since August in axe, gun and spear battles between the rival anti-apartheid movements, more than 60 of them in the past three weeks at Alexandra.

An Alexandra civic organisation spokesman said gangs of men were roaming the township randomly attacking residents, despite a heavy police presence.

The Inkatha/ANC fighting continues despite a peace accord worked out in January between Buthelezi and Mandela.

The ANC accused "people perceived as members of Inkatha" of whipping up the violence in Alexandra and appealed to Inkatha's national leadership to control its supporters.

"Shack dwellers have been forced out of their homes, which are occupied by people known to wear red headbands and perceived as members of Inkatha," the ANC said in a statement.

"The occupants have been made homeless and form part of the refugee population which now exceeds 700 people," it said.

A red bandana is the traditional "uniform" of the Zulu-based Inkatha Movement.

Police later said four black mine workers and two women were shot dead and six people wounded early Sunday by five blacks who opened fire with automatic rifles at a gold mine west of Johannesburg.

The attackers arrived at the Westonaria-Elsburg Mine compound in two minibuses and opened fire with AK-47 assault rifles on residents of the living quarters there.

The spokesman said there was no apparent reason for the attack but that police were investigating a political motive. No arrests had been made.

The poll showed that 70 per cent opposed one of the budget's main edicts — a boost in value added tax from 15 per cent to 17.5 per cent.

Polls also indicated public scepticism towards any notion Major has broken sharply with Thatcherism.

In a speech to party activists Saturday, he affirmed his commitment to Thatcher's key policies of privatisation, cuts in direct taxation and fighting inflation.

But at the same time, he firmly shifted his party's focus towards improving social conditions after a decade of tough, free-market Thatcherism during which, critics say, standards of public services such as health, transport and education slipped.

In the Gallup survey, 38 per cent said they had been slightly changed and only 18 per cent described the shift as drastic.

Major has given no hint of his favoured date for an election, which must be held by July 1992. But many politicians believe he is considering calling a ballot in June or October this year.

Albania prepares for 1st free elections in 45 years

TIRANA (R) — Albanians face a bewildering political novelty this week as more than 1,000 candidates and six parties campaign in the first multi-party elections after 45 years of Communist rule.

The polls on March 31 will be a watershed in a year of sweeping change in the Balkan state as it emerges from decades of isolation imposed by late Stalinist leader Enver Hoxha.

The main contest looks set to be between the three-month-old Democratic Party and the (Communist) Party of Labour.

Few people are willing to forecast the result.

"Albania is quite unpredictable — there has been no history of free expression here, and this makes a tremendous difference between us and most of the other East European countries," one Albanian journalist commented.

"It seems there are many people who might vote for the Democrats, but they are not actually saying so."

The Democrats apparently enjoy support in towns but farmers in the countryside have gained by recent moves by Communist President Ramiz Alia to give them small parcels of land.

The Communist Party, which under Hoxha broke foreign relations, crushed religion and political dissent and even banned men from wearing beards, has introduced cautious reforms in the face of unprecedented protest and tried to revamp its image.

A meeting of some 200 Communist leaders Saturday called for "all-round renovation of the party so that it keeps pace with the times."

It also urged members to go out and canvass electoral support — a novelty for party supporters accustomed to more than four decades of one-party rule.

Although a party meeting in December pledged continued loyalty to Marxist ideals, Albanian journalists say the Communists seem to have deliberately avoided mentioning Marxism in their pre-election statement.

The Democratic Party, founded in mid-December by leading intellectuals, claims a membership of 100,000 which it says is about 20,000 less than the Communists.

The Democrats clearly enjoy large support in towns particularly Tirana, where hundreds of people mill in and out of the dilapidated villa which became their headquarters last month.

"The Party of Labour doesn't have such a centre of activity," one student commented.

The government forces in desperation have resorted to several aerial bombardments in Mannar area. The Sri Lankan naval gun boats are shelling the coastal areas," it said.

Military sources denied the charge.

Thilakar said the rebels wanted to capture the two camps because they protected Sinhalese settlers in the area and were also used as a staging post for attacks on the Tigers.

The group opposes the settlement of members of the majority Sinhalese community in Mannar and other northern areas which militant Tamils claim as their homeland.

Military sources said Mannar was of strategic importance to the Tigers because of its access to south India, the main source of weapons and supplies for the rebels.

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Other Democrats considering '92 presidential bids are Govs. L. Douglas Wilder of Virginia and Bill Clinton of Iowa, and Sen. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska. Former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas is in Iowa this week to explore a candidacy.

Foley and Brown promised to lead the partisan charge until Democratic candidates emerge.

Brown and other party leaders said the late start of the campaign suited them fine — and had perhaps helped the party.

"I think it might have been a disaster for our candidates to be engaged in partisan politics during a very popular war," Brown said. Now, however, "we intend to take on George Bush and we intend to beat him."

Foley, in a combative speech, took on not only Bush but Democrats who have been quoted in media accounts as saying the party is in deep trouble because of the boost the war has given Bush and fellow Republicans.

Bush was elected to a four-year term in 1988, succeeding two-term President Ronald Reagan, another Republican. The last Democrat in office was Jimmy Carter, who handed over power to Reagan in January 1981.

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"The community as such was absent because it had no political dimension," Luxembourg Prime Minister Jacques Santer, the current EC president, said Friday.

The Netherlands requested Tuesday's ministerial talks in January, shortly after the start of the war exposed problems in establishing a joint course of action.

The 12 agree that foreign and security affairs must be better coordinated, whether by reinforcing the current scheme or creating a new formal link.

But the defence question has split the bloc into those who see an EC military structure as a natural complement for joint

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All EC states except neutral Ireland belong to NATO. Nine of them also make up the Western European Union (WEU), a long-dormant body which sprang to life during the Gulf crisis and helped coordinate the dispatch of European warships.

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Britain, like the Netherlands,

Moderate quake shakes northern California

WATSONVILLE, California (AP) — A moderate-sized earthquake struck late Saturday in the same area devastated by a much larger quake two years ago, but there were no reports of injuries or serious damage.

The quake, which struck about 7:12 p.m. local time (0312 GMT), measured 4.8 on the Richter Scale of ground motion and was centred three miles (1.8 kilometres) northeast of Watsonville, which is about 70 miles (112 kilometres) south of San Francisco, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) officials reported.

Previous reports of a second, 1.2-magnitude tremor about an hour later were incorrect, said Allan Lindh, a seismologist with the USGS. He attributed the error to confusion over the time zone difference between California and Colorado, where the USGS survey office is located, and to different recording methods used to measure the size and location of earthquakes.

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Britain, like the Netherlands,

fears a complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Europe if Washington sees the EC as challenging its NATO leadership and has proposed turning defence questions over to the WEU as soon as they arise, precluding an EC role.

France, Germany and Italy want a slow merger of the WEU into the Community so that it eventually becomes the EC defence arm.

The debate is further complicated by NATO's efforts to redefine its role now that the cold war is over and its enemy for decades, the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact, is being scrapped.

NATO's current treaty bars it from action outside the borders of its 16 member countries.

The WEU has no such limitations, and its supporters say the provisions in its treaty for automatic and compulsory mutual defence among its members are better than NATO's.

Identity mix-up costs baby's life

BANGKOK (R) — A case of mistaken identity at a Bangkok hospital led to the death of a two-month-old baby police said was murdered by a woman who thought it was hers. Somsri Chantoh, 20, was given the wrong baby when she went to Bangkok's Children's Hospital early this month to collect her own daughter who was being treated there, police said Sunday.

Somsri, a shoe factory worker, did not realise the hospital's mistake and later suffocated the child, stuffed her body into a bag and abandoned it in bushes near a suburban housing estate. Police said Somsri, who has been charged with deliberate homicide, told them she killed the baby on March 6 because she was too poor to raise her. The mix-up was discovered when the real parents of the murdered girl reported it to hospital authorities, who informed police Friday. The hospital has set up a committee to investigate allegations of negligence against two nurses.

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Sir Edmund Hillary, one of the first two men to climb Mt. Everest, was named special representative for the children of the Himalayas by the United Nations Children's Fund UNICEF. The New Zealand-born explorer, 71, together with his Sherpa guide from Nepal, Tenzing Norgay, conquered Mt. Everest in 1953. Since his first climbing expedition to the Himalayas in 1951, Sir Edmund has helped establish 26 primary schools in a district in Nepal where some 3,000 pupils have been enrolled. He has also been instrumental in building hospitals, bridges, water supply pipelines and airstrips for the people in the region. Sir Edmund said in a news conference Friday he will continue his work of more than 30 years to benefit the lives of children in the Himalayas. UNICEF officials say Nepal, one of the world's poorest nations, has a literacy rate of only 35 per cent.

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French actor Gerard Depardieu has denied a recent magazine report that he took part in rapes, saying he "respects women too much." The French movie star made the denial in the French newspaper Le Monde, which suggested Depardieu might boycott the U.S. Academy Awards ceremonies in Los Angeles Monday. Depardieu, 41, has been nominated for five Oscars including best foreign film. The actor was quoted in the Feb. 25 issue of the U.S. news-magazine Time as saying he had taken part in many rapes, the first when he was nine years old. "It was all absolutely normal in those circumstances," he was quoted by the magazine as saying. "That all makes me laugh. That was part of my childhood." But Depardieu, one of France's most successful actors and considered by many its best, told Le Monde, "I categorically deny the comment attributed to me in Time magazine concerning a rape that I committed when I was nine."

"It's outrageous, at nine years old or at any age," he said. "Yes, one can say I had sexual experiences when I was very young, but a rape, never. I respect women too much." The newspaper contacted him in Mauritius, an Indian Ocean island, where he is making a film with director Gerard Lauzier.

Man buries mother alive

PEKING (R) — Police in western China have arrested a man who killed his mother by burying her alive in hopes of improving his luck, a regional newspaper said. The man dreamt of his 78-year-old mother holding a golden lotus at a spot in front of their house in Sichuan province, said the March 16 edition of the Shan-tou Special Zone Daily. The man, a poor farmer, had been dissatisfied with his failure to prosper, it said. He believed his dream directed him to bury his mother alive in that spot to achieve good fortune. He chose last Dec. 26 as an auspicious day for the deed. The newspaper said the farmer had dabbled in the Chinese art of geomancy, or the magical alignment of people in relation to their surroundings as a means of ensuring good luck. Police arrested him on Jan. 3, the newspaper said.

Geneva talks to raise plight of unwanted Vietnamese boat people

GENEVA (R) — Informal talks open in Geneva Monday on the plight of tens of thousands of Vietnamese boat people no country wants to take in.

Refugee officials said the two-day, 12-nation meeting would pave the way for a full-scale conference on how to send home an estimated 110,000 Vietnamese languishing in South East Asian camps after trying to find a better life abroad.

Most are deemed economic migrants rather than political refugees and do not qualify for resettlement in Western nations.

The officials said no decision was expected on whether to bow to pressure from Hong Kong and go ahead with forced repatriation. The United States is steadily

fastly opposed to the scheme on humanitarian grounds.

Vietnam, also attending the meeting, wants massive Western aid to cope with any influx of returnees but has also made clear it will not take back people sent home against their will.

Participants from first-asylum nations and Western resettlement countries, including the United States, Canada and Australia, will probably proclaim that an agreement signed in Geneva 18 months ago is not dead.

Under the accord first-asylum countries agreed to allow boat people to land so long as genuine refugees were accepted for resettlement in the West and those classified as economic migrants were sent home.

It failed in its goal of discouraging further emigration from Vietnam.

But screening under the Geneva agreement has made it far harder for migrants to qualify for resettlement.

Diplomats said the meeting was called by Britain, Canada and Australia to drive home the message that those not recognised as genuine political refugees would eventually have to go home.

"There is a widespread notion among camp populations that the resolve is weakening and that their chances of reaching the promised land are improving," one refugee official said.

Indian election campaign strikes sensitive nerves

NEW DELHI (AP) — For the second time in 18 months, campaign posters are going up in India for what promises to be a hard-fought and possibly bloody election for the office of prime minister.

The three-way contest may be one of the most evenly split ever seen in this nation, which until recently was dominated by a single family and its party.

The main contestants are two former prime ministers, Rajiv Gandhi and V.P. Singh, and Lal Krishna Advani, a quiet intellectual who leads a hardline Hindu revivalist party.

Incumbent Chandra Shekhar vastly improved his brief tenure but is barely in the running because he lacks a national organisation.

The issues are caste, class and stability. The campaign will touch the most sensitive nerves of every Indian: His religion and the role to which his birth has consigned him in society's hierarchy.

These questions are brushing aside the more tangible issue of separatist insurrections by Sikhs in Punjab, Muslims in Kashmir and Assamese in the far east state of Assam.

Not is anyone focusing on the grim state of the economy, except for vague promises of "bread and jobs." Inflation has climbed to double digits in this vast and poor nation where price rises can spell hunger for millions more people.

India also faces a balance-of-payments crisis which has cut its credit rating to the lowest rank.

The election commission has not yet set a date for the voting, but it should be no more than two weeks before June 5, when the new parliament is to convene.

Political scientists say the election comes at a time when the voters are realigning in ways that are not yet clear.

"The party system has lost credibility with the voters. The electorate is now very mobile, uncertain," said Bhabani Sen Gupta, of the Centre for Policy Research, an independent think tank.

"The most striking feature of Indian politics has been the growing alienation and bitterness among religious communities," and among Hindu castes, said Zoya Hasan of the Centre for Political Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University.

She predicted the upper classes which have dominated politics for India's 43 years of independence will come under unprecedented challenge.

Each party in its own way is appealing to the great mass of voters who typically are faithfully Hindu, poorly educated and struggling to provide for their oversized families.

The election was precipitated by the equivocal results of the last election in November 1989 when

opposition parties combined to unseat Gandhi and his Congress Party.